

The Boston Red Sox Tuesday, November 5, 2019

*** *The Boston Globe***

J.D. Martinez is staying, so what happens with Mookie Betts?

Peter Abraham

J.D. Martinez decided to remain with the Red Sox on Monday night, declining to opt out of his contract and become a free agent.

That should be news worth celebrating. The 32-year-old Martinez hits for power and average, is a good influence on the work ethic of younger teammates, and has created an impenetrable bubble to filter out the distractions that can come with playing in Boston.

The key to the 2018 championship was Martinez giving the Sox a presence in the middle of the lineup that was missing after David Ortiz retired in 2016.

Martinez is also a relative bargain at \$23.75 million next season, when you consider the now-regrettable deals for power hitters such as Miguel Cabrera, Chris Davis, and Albert Pujols.

He's been perfect for the Red Sox when you add it all up.

But would it have been even better had he bailed out? Talk about first-world problems.

Martinez's entire salary for 2020 will count toward how Major League Baseball calculates payroll for the purposes of the luxury tax. It's actually \$1.75 million more than it was last season.

That complicates the already-difficult task new chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom has to trim what has become a bloated payroll.

Ownership has made it a goal to cut the payroll below \$208 million and reset the penalties the Sox have been paying for two seasons. It's not a mandate, but goals tend to become mandates when the people in charge are the ones setting the goal.

One quick way to cut would be to trade Mookie Betts, who is in line to make approximately \$28 million next season.

As good as Martinez has been, Betts is a better all-around player. The Red Sox lose in that calculus.

CEO Sam Kennedy said in October it would be possible to keep both Betts and Martinez and get under \$208 million. But that would almost surely require trading a number of other players and having Betts and Martinez sopping up a quarter of the payroll.

Betts can become a free agent after next season and seems determined to do just that. As good as he is, it will be difficult to find a taker for \$28 million and give up prospects anywhere close to approximately his value.

The Tampa Bay Rays made assorted bloodless moves when Bloom was their second in command, knowing their tiny fan base could howl only so loud. Bloom has been on the job for a week now and surely understands that trading Betts is not how he wants to start his tenure.

The best move you can make with Betts is spending the next year trying to negotiate an extension.

Trading Martinez is a better option. His salary would be easier for a team — say, the White Sox? — to absorb. While the return for a player who is essentially a designated hitter wouldn't restock the farm system, it would help add a few pieces.

Plenty of teams would be eager to have shortstop Xander Bogaerts and his affordable deal. But that would be wholly unfair to an organizational favorite who insisted that agent Scott Boras negotiate an extension last March. So don't do that.

Another thought: Trade Andrew Benintendi and Jackie Bradley. That would save roughly \$16 million. Convert infielder Michael Chavis to left, switch Betts to center, and find a low-cost right fielder.

Then take 50 cents on the dollar and trade either David Price or Chris Sale, knowing you won't get much in return. They would get you \$15 million off the books. Then count on Bloom to creatively fill out the rotation.

If the Sox can hold onto Betts, Bogaerts, Rafael Devers, Chavis, Christian Vazquez, and either Benintendi or Bradley, that's the base of a good lineup.

Try rookie slugger Bobby Dalbec at first base and Marco Hernandez at second.

Or there's this: Keep the gang together and pay high luxury taxes for one more season. If you're convinced Price, Sale, and Nate Eovaldi are healthy, take a run at a second title in three years.

But the Yankees and Dodgers got under the threshold because it's ultimately to the team's advantage in the long run. The Sox can't keep this money train running forever.

Besides, they hired Bloom to find a better way to improve the team than writing more checks.

However it plays out, Martinez coming back made what was already sure to be an eventful offseason even more compelling.

Dwight Evans getting another look from Baseball Hall of Fame

Peter Abraham

Dwight Evans finally has a second chance at the Hall of Fame.

The graceful right fielder is one of 10 people on the ballot the Modern Era committee will consider when it votes Dec. 8. The news came Monday, a day after Evans turned 68.

"I'm looking forward to whatever happens," Evans said. "I'm still trying to take this all in. This is something I cherish."

Evans was with the Red Sox from 1972-90, hitting .272 with an .842 OPS. He was an eight-time Gold Glove winner with 385 home runs and 1,384 RBIs, a testament to his all-around skills.

Evans was on the Baseball Writers' Association of America ballot for the first time in 1997 but fell off in 1999 after receiving only 3.6 percent of the vote.

Evans was overshadowed at the time by a number of other outfielders, including longtime Sox teammate Jim Rice.

Rice stayed on the ballot and made it to Cooperstown in 2009. But Evans, until now, didn't have that chance.

The delay could serve Evans well if the committee voters do their homework.

In the age of advanced statistics, Evans retrospectively shines. His 67.1 WAR is higher than Rice (47.7), Dave Winfield (64.2), Tony Perez (54.0) and, in particular, Harold Baines (38.7), who was elected through the "Today's Game" committee a year ago.

Baines had an .820 OPS from 1980-2001 with 384 home runs and 1,628 RBIs.

"I hope they look at all those things," Evans said. "They can measure so much now that we didn't know about back then."

From 1980-89, Evans led the majors with 605 extra-base hits, more than Hall of Famers Robin Yount, Eddie Murray, Andre Dawson, and Baines had with more at-bats.

Evans had an .882 OPS during that decade, sixth among his peers and higher than nine Hall of Famers.

"I'm a big believer that you should be judged against the players in your generation," Evans said. "I'm a student of the history of baseball and how the game has changed over the years. I think that eras and generations are different. That's how I feel."

Evans also should benefit from the increased focus on defense this generation.

"I'd like to think I saved a lot of runs," Evans said. "I won't want to make my own case or pat myself on the back. But, hey, I'm out there. I think I had a good career when compared to other in my generation. I hope there's a reward in that."

The new ballot also includes Steve Garvey, Tommy John, Don Mattingly, Thurman Munson, Dale Murphy, Dave Parker, Ted Simmons, and Lou Whitaker along with the late Marvin Miller, who led the MLB Players Association from 1966-82.

For Garvey, Mattingly, Murphy, and Parker, in particular, Baines's induction will create hope. But 12 of a possible 16 votes (75 percent) are needed.

The Hall of Fame will not reveal the members of the committee until early next month.

Castillo stays put

Triple A Pawtucket outfielder Rusney Castillo, as you would expect, declined to opt out of the final year of his contract and will collect \$13.5 million next season. That will be his final year. Using a since closed-loophole, the Sox outrighted Castillo to the minors in 2016 to keep his salary from counting against MLB's payroll luxury tax.

Additionally, the Sox outrighted catcher Juan Centeno and he elected free agency. Centeno, 29, spent the majority of the season in Triple A Pawtucket, but did see action in seven games at the big-league level this season where he hit .133.

The Sox' 40-man roster is down to 34.

In Guadalajara, Mexico, Sox prospect Bobby Dalbec singled in a run and scored another as Team USA beat the Dominican Republic, 10-8, in the Premier12 tourney — an Olympic qualifier — and advance to the Super Round next week in Tokyo.

Awards shutout

The Baseball Writers' Association of America announced the finalists for Rookie of the Year, Manager of the Year, Cy Young Award, and Most Valuable Player honors. No Red Sox players made the cut.

Finalists for AL MVP are the Astros' Alex Bregman, the A's Marcus Semien, and the Angels' Mike Trout. Trout is seeking his third MVP after winning in 2014 and '16. He finished second in 2012, '13, '15, and '18.

Nationals third baseman Anthony Rendon, Dodgers outfielder Cody Bellinger, and Brewers outfielder Christian Yelich are the top three for the NL honor. Yelich won last year's NL MVP award with 29 of 30 first-place votes.

The AL Cy Young finalists are the Astros' Gerrit Cole and Justin Verlander, and the Rays' Charlie Morton.

In the NL, Mets ace Jacob deGrom is a finalist for the Cy Young after getting 29 of 30 first-place votes last year. He is competing with Washington's Max Scherzer, a three-time Cy Young winner, and the Dodgers' Hyun-Jin Ryu.

Mets first baseman Pete Alonso, Atlanta righthander Mike Soroka, and San Diego shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. are finalists for the NL Rookie of the Year, while Houston designated hitter Yordan Álvarez, Tampa Bay second baseman Brandon Lowe, and Baltimore lefthander John Means are the AL's top candidates.

The Yankees' Aaron Boone, Minnesota's Rocco Baldelli, and Tampa Bay's Kevin Cash are finalists for AL Manager of the Year. In the NL, Atlanta's Brian Snitker, a finalist to win for the second straight season, is joined by Milwaukee's Craig Counsell and the Cardinals' Mike Shildt.

Rookies of the Year are announced Nov. 11, followed by Managers of the Year (Nov. 12), Cy Youngs (Nov. 13), and MVPs (Nov. 14).

Yankees pass on Didi

The Yankees failed to make a \$17.8 million qualifying offer to Didi Gregorius and will not receive draft-pick compensation if the free agent shortstop signs with another team. Gregorius, who turns 30 in February, came back from Tommy John surgery in early June and hit .238 with 16 homers and 61 RBIs in 82 games.

Tyler Lyons, who earned a spot on the Yankees' postseason roster as a lefthanded reliever, refused an outright assignment to Triple A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre and elected to become a free agent.

Markakis in, Teheran out

The Braves are bringing back outfielder Nick Markakis in what will likely be a reduced role next season, but Julio Teheran's long tenure with the team could be over.

Atlanta announced it had re-signed Markakis and catcher Tyler Flowers to \$4 million, one-year contracts for 2020 after declining their team options.

Teheran, the first pitcher to make six straight Opening Day starts for Atlanta, also had a club option for 2020. The team turned that down, making the 28-year-old righthander a free agent after completing a \$32.4 million, six-year contract.

Atlanta opted against a \$12 million option for Teheran in 2020, instead paying a \$1 million buyout. The move was not unexpected on the heels of Teheran being initially left off the postseason roster after going 10-11 with a 3.81 ERA.

The Braves also made a \$17.8 million qualifying offer to free agent third baseman Josh Donaldson, ensuring they'll receive at least one compensatory draft pick should he sign elsewhere.

Salazar goes free

The Indians have given up on former All-Star Danny Salazar, whose career has been sidetracked by injuries. Salazar was reinstated from the 60-day disabled list and refused an outright assignment to Triple A Columbus, electing to become a free agent. Salazar, 29 made the AL All-Star team in 2016 before shoulder problems set him back . . . The Angels declined their \$14 million contract option for next season on

longtime right fielder Kole Calhoun. The 32-year-old outfielder gets a \$1 million buyout as part of his \$26 million, three-year contract and becomes a free agent for the first time . . . The Twins declined a \$7.5 million option on lefthander Martin Pérez and made a \$17.8 million qualifying offer to All-Star Jake Odorizzi . . . The Brewers cut \$15 million in payroll for next season, trading righthander Chase Anderson to the Blue Jays for prospect Chad Spanberger and declining a \$7.5 million option on first baseman Eric Thames . . . Madison Bumgarner received a \$17.8 million qualifying offer from the Giants, a move that likely will decrease demand for him in the free agent market. San Francisco's decision means a team signing Bumgarner would lose at least one pick in next year's amateur draft as compensation unless a deal is struck after the draft starts in June. Bumgarner, 30, wrapped up a \$35.56 million, six-year contract signed in April 2012 that included \$12 million club options for both 2018 and '19 . . . The Pirates exercised their 2020 options on pitcher Chris Archer and center fielder Starling Marte. Archer is scheduled to make \$9 million next season and Marte \$11.5 million following Pittsburgh's decisions Monday . . . Elvis Andrus is staying with the Rangers after the shortstop passed up on a second chance to opt out of his contract and become a free agent. Andrus, who just completed his 11th season with the Rangers, has \$43 million and three years left on his contract in Texas.

J.D. Martinez not opting out of contract with Red Sox

Julian McWilliams

J.D. Martinez, whose meticulous approach to every at-bat has made him one of baseball's best hitters, has decided not to opt out of his five-year Red Sox contract that will pay him \$23.75 million in 2020, according to a league source.

The decision means the Red Sox retain a player who hit better than .300 and more than 35 home runs each of the past two seasons, but complicates matters as the team tries to move toward its goal of getting the payroll below the luxury-tax threshold of \$208 million in 2020.

Martinez, whose full \$23.75 million salary will count toward the luxury-tax figure in 2020, also has opt-outs after the 2020 and 2021 seasons. He has three years and \$62.5 million left on the deal he signed in 2018.

The decision also means that Martinez, 32, will not test the market, where he would have had to find a deal worth more than the remaining value of his contract to make it worth his while.

"J.D. has advised me that his decision is about assuring that he plays for a competitive team and wanting to continue to play in a place where he knows that he can be highly productive," said Scott Boras, who represents Martinez.

The past two offseasons have seen some high-profile players wait a considerable time before signing. Former Red Sox reliever Craig Kimbrel stayed on the market until June before signing with the Chicago Cubs, and Padres infielder Manny Machado and Phillies outfielder Bryce Harper — who were both 26-year-old free agents — didn't sign until spring training was underway.

Martinez has his share of experience with that, too.

Former president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski signed Martinez to a five-year, \$110 million contract during spring training in 2018, and Martinez was one of the key pieces as the Red Sox won a team-record 108 games and then the World Series. He hit .330 with a 1.031 OPS while also driving in 130 runs and hitting 43 homers. He ranked second in baseball in both homers and batting average, and led the league in RBIs.

Though the Red Sox missed the playoffs in 2019 and Martinez didn't replicate his 2018 campaign, his numbers were still formidable. He hit .304 with 36 homers and a .939 OPS and drove in 104 runs. Martinez's home run total, OPS, and batting average all ranked in the top 10 in the American League.

“I don’t think he cares about the numbers,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said in August. “I think he cares about the quality of at-bats. We know on a daily basis he will give you quality at-bats.”

The grind-them-out at-bats paid dividends for Martinez and had a trickle-down effect as he became a resource for teammates to lean on for advice at the plate. Martinez became something of an extension to the coaching staff.

“I remember last year, it was his first year and everyone wanted to go to J.D. for advice,” shortstop Xander Bogaerts said. “Even me a couple times. Whenever stuff isn’t going right, you either go to the hitting coach or you go to J.D. He’s definitely changed a lot of us on this team with the mind-set and the advice. He’s definitely huge.”

Martinez said during the All-Star break that Boras would be a key voice.

“I just listen to him,” Martinez said. “That’s what I pay him for. He gives me his opinion. He gives me his advice and it’s up to me after that to make my decision.”

Martinez’s numbers at the plate are impressive, but his play in the outfield has been below average, which likely limits his market to American League teams. Since the start of 2016, he has posted minus-39 defensive runs saved in the outfield, and in 2019 he was minus-7 for the Red Sox. His ultimate zone rating was minus-4.8.

Martinez’s status was one of the two biggest offseason story lines for the Red Sox, along with the question of Mookie Betts’s future. Red Sox president Sam Kennedy has said it would be tough to keep both All-Stars as the team attempts to get under the luxury tax threshold.

Martinez’s tenure in Boston benefited both sides.

“It’s been great,” Martinez said. “I came here and won a World Series. That was the goal. It’s been awesome.”

*** *The Boston Herald***

J.D. Martinez will not opt out of Red Sox contract for 2020

Jason Mastrodonato

Now the work begins.

J.D. Martinez on Monday chose not to opt out of the remaining three years and \$62.5 million left on his contract with the Red Sox, putting the team on the clock as it determines how to approach the 2020 season.

The news was first reported by ESPN just after Monday’s 5 p.m. deadline for teams to issue qualifying offers. The Sox did not issue qualifying offers to any of their departing free agents (Rick Porcello, Mitch Moreland, Brock Holt and Andrew Cashner).

While Martinez opting into his contract might seem like a positive move for the Sox, who will retain a 32-year-old designated hitter who has averaged .317 and 40 homers over two seasons in Boston, the Red Sox may now need to find a trade for Martinez or Mookie Betts before the 2020 season.

The Sox would like to get under the \$208-million payroll for luxury tax purposes and hope to reset the penalty structure to give them more flexibility in 2021 and 2022.

That means shaving upwards of \$30 million off their payroll in what could be a bridge year in 2020.

Asked in September if it was possible to maintain both Martinez and Betts, team president Sam Kennedy said, "There is a way, but obviously it will be difficult."

Chaim Bloom, the new chief baseball officer who will ultimately decide what to do with the star players, wouldn't answer any specific questions during his introductory press conference last Monday.

But Bloom seemed to have a clear understanding of how he wanted to shape a franchise that had been glued to the win-now model for the last three years until former boss Dave Dombrowski decided to stand pat at the 2019 trade deadline and watch the Red Sox fade from the playoff picture.

Under Bloom, there may be no such thing as a window.

Asked about Betts last Monday, he said, "Generally our priority is going to be sustainability and competitiveness over the long-term. And that can take many forms. But really that's going to be the top priority as we think about moves."

Which move makes the Red Sox more sustainable over the long-term, keeping Betts for the final year of his contract (he'll make around \$30 million in arbitration) and then competing for his services on an open market with 29 other teams? Or trading Betts this offseason, when the team still has some leverage, and trying to find the next young star who can add up to six years of team control in future seasons (and still competing for his services in free agency next winter, if they choose to do so)?

It would seem like a no-brainer to search for trading partners now, with the Sox having too many holes to fill without enough financial freedom to fill them.

The only thing fighting against them is fan interest.

If Betts is traded, they'd have to sell the future to a fan base that has lost its appetite for patience, particularly given the ever-growing cost of the fan experience at Fenway Park.

But if the Sox can find some exciting young players to enter the mix in 2020, there will at least be something worth paying attention to, whether or not the team is a World Series contender.

Can they really compete with a Yankees team that just won 19 more games than they did, came two wins short of the World Series and will likely target the very best free agents this winter (in large part because they reset their luxury tax structure after 2018)?

It seems almost impossible for the Sox, given the vast differences in flexibility this winter, but Bloom was hired in part for his creativity, and he does have experience in identifying undervalued assets with regularity in Tampa Bay.

The bottom line is that the Red Sox now have five players making at least \$20 million (Betts, Martinez, David Price, Chris Sale and Xander Bogaerts) and three of them expected to make at least \$30 million (Betts, Price and Sale), with few prospects who look ready to make an impact at the big league level.

They can take the play-it-by-ear approach and wait until the trade deadline to move any of their key veterans, but by then they'll lose leverage, and there tends to be more teams who think they can contend in the offseason than in July.

Had Martinez opted out of his contract, the Sox could've been one move away from shedding enough salary to avoid the luxury tax threshold and leave them some wiggle room to compete.

With Martinez now locked into his salary, Bloom and Co. will have to get creative.

The challenging offseason has begun.

* **MassLive.com**

Dwight Evans Hall of Famer? Former Red Sox star's case bolstered by baseball's evolving analytics

Matt Vautour

Dwight Evans is glad he's being considered for induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame and he's hoping to get in, but the longtime Red Sox right fielder won't be defined by whatever the Modern Era Committee officially decides on Dec. 8.

"I'm happy with my life. If my life was all about the Hall of Fame and what I've done, my life is pretty sad," said Evans, who is a roving minor league instructor for the Red Sox, who he played 19 of his 20 career seasons for.

Evans, who dropped off the BBWAA ballot in 1999, is on the ballot for the Modern Era Committee that was revealed Monday. Lou Whitaker, Dale Murphy, Thurman Munson, Dave Parker and Steve Garvey, Tommy John, Don Mattingly, Ted Simmons and Marvin Miller are also up for election.

The Modern Era committee is one of four subsets of what used to be the veterans' committee. It judges players who made their greatest impacts from 1970-1987. They only vote on players every four years.

Evans, who turned 68 Sunday, hasn't played baseball since retiring after the 1991 season, but his candidacy has improved largely because of the evolving way baseball players are evaluated.

His 385 home runs, 1,384 RBIs and career .272 batting average are better than some players who are already in Cooperstown but not many. But he led the American League in home runs (256) during the 1980s and led all of baseball in extra-base hits during that time period.

Further hurting him is that he played right before the steroid era, so his single-season and career power totals look comparatively small compared to the players who followed him.

"They didn't judge me on my generation, they judged me against all-time," Evans said. "Steroids changed things."

Had Sabermetrics been prominent during his career, Evans would have been looked at differently. On-base percentage and drawing walks (Evans is 29th all-time with 1,391) didn't hold nearly the esteem then as they do now.

Pioneering Sabermetrician Bill James wrote an open letter supporting Evans' candidacy in 2012 for Grantland. It includes this paragraph:

"On-base percentage is much more closely tied to scoring runs (and to winning games) than is batting average, and in the 21st century, all baseball people know this. But in the 1970s, very few people knew it, so Dwight Evans was evaluated by the baseball writers of his time more based on his batting averages, which were OK, than on his on-base percentages, which were outstanding."

Defense adds to Evans' case. He's widely considered one of the best three defensive right fielders of all-time behind only Roberto Clemente and Ichiro Suzuki. His eight gold gloves and cannon arm in Fenway's expansive and difficult right field certainly stand out. But defense has had limited influence historically on Hall of Fame voting with a few notable exceptions (Ozzie Smith et al).

His candidacy appears to have gotten a bit of a boost by the induction of Harold Baines, whose numbers are inferior to Evans' even without including defense which would widen the gap further.

Evans, who found out he was on the ballot while on a California golf vacation with friends, said he doesn't plan on analyzing his chances.

"I'm proud of what happened today and I'm happy to be acknowledged and that's basically enough for me," he said. "I was pushed out for so many years. I'm not saying I don't want to go in. It's nice to be recognized. But that's not all that makes me tick."

J.D. Martinez staying with Boston Red Sox, declines to opt out of contract

Christopher Smith

J.D. Martinez has declined to opt out of his contract's remaining three years, \$62.5 million. He will remain with the Red Sox for at least 2020 when he'll earn \$23.750 million.

ESPN's Jeff Passan and MLB Network's Jon Heyman both reported the news.

Martinez has batted .317 with a .392 on-base percentage, .593 slugging percentage, .985 OPS, 79 homers, 70 doubles, four triples and 235 RBIs in 296 games (1,306 plate appearances) since signing a five-year, \$110-million contract with Boston in February 2018.

The 32-year-old slugger is contracted to earn \$19.350 million in 2021 and \$19.350 million in 2022. He has the ability to opt out of his contract again after both the 2020 and 2021 seasons.

MassLiv.com's Chris Cotillo is reporting his contract will remain the same as no adjustments were made before his decision.

With Martinez remaining in Boston, the possibility of trading Mookie Betts becomes more realistic.

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 and reliever. They need to figure out who will start at second base and first base as well.

Martinez will count \$23.75 million toward the Competitive Balance Tax in 2020.

Team president Sam Kennedy said it would possible to keep the payroll under \$208 million if Betts and Martinez both are on the 2020 roster. But it won't be easy.

"There is a way but obviously it will be difficult given the nature of the agreements and the contracts that we have in place," Kennedy said Sept. 30.

Red Sox GM Brian O'Halloran added, "Challenging is the word I would say."

The Red Sox are likely to explore the trade markets for both Martinez and Betts. But it seems more likely Betts will be traded considering his reluctance to sign an extension and the better prospect return.

J.D. Martinez staying with Boston Red Sox will have ripple effects throughout the winter

Christopher Smith

J.D. Martinez made his decision Monday afternoon, choosing to remain with the Red Sox instead of opting out of his contract and becoming a free agent. That simple call has major implications on both the franchise and the player. They are:

Martinez essentially signed a 1-year, \$23.75 million contract.

Martinez will earn \$23.75 million in 2020 and have another opt-out clause after the season, so he's essentially signing a 1-year deal. The Red Sox did not make any adjustments to the deal to sway Martinez's decision, according to a source, so his contract remains the same moving forward.

Martinez will earn \$23.75 million in 2020 and \$19.375 million in both 2021 and 2022. He has the ability to opt out after each of the next two seasons and the deal does include some specific language about his option becoming a mutual option if his Lisfranc foot injury pops up. That injury has not been a concern in his first two years with the Red Sox.

The Red Sox are facing a legitimate salary crunch.

Boston's goal to get under the \$208 million competitive balance tax threshold just became much tougher. Martinez's \$23.75 million salary counts for that amount against the CBT tax, taking up nearly 11.5% of their cap room.

Martinez's deal brings the Red Sox' payroll to \$135.5 million in guaranteed contracts for seven players (Martinez, David Price, Chris Sale, Xander Bogaerts, Nathan Eovaldi, Dustin Pedroia and Christian Vazquez). Arbitration raises for 14 more players (including Mookie Betts, Jackie Bradley Jr. and Eduardo Rodriguez) and some included operating costs will account for \$80-85 more million, putting the Sox around the \$220 million mark in estimated payroll.

To slash payroll, the Sox could look to trade Betts or Martinez or try to offload a starting pitcher (Price? Eovaldi?) in a salary relief deal. Boston could also look to non-tender Bradley Jr. or get creative by manipulating the back end of its roster. However new chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom decides to do it, one thing is certain: change is coming.

Martinez and Mookie Betts are both trade candidates.

Bloom will likely entertain offers to both Martinez and Betts, who are Boston's most attractive expensive trade pieces. As team president/CEO Sam Kennedy said at the end of the season, it's "challenging and difficult" to envision both Martinez and Betts on their 2020 roster, meaning the chance of one being traded is high.

Betts, who is projected to earn \$27.7 million in 2020, would have a robust market of contenders looking to add one of the best all-around players in baseball for a year before free agency. If the Sox receive no clear indication that they have a good chance of signing Betts to a long-term extension, they'll likely shop the reigning American League MVP aggressively.

A Martinez trade can't be ruled out, but it is much more tricky. Martinez's market is limited to American League teams only, meaning there are only about 14 possible destinations for him. Non-contenders and teams who have set designated hitters won't be involved, suppressing his market even further. And lastly, Martinez has a 3-team no-trade clause he can update later this month, according to a source, meaning he's likely to give himself the ability to block trades to the teams he views as most interested, thus further complicating the potential for a deal.

Betts is much more likely to be traded than Martinez if one of them is dealt. But again, Bloom's creativity could allow the Red Sox to keep both.

The Red Sox kept one of the best players in baseball on their roster.

It's a bit unfortunate Martinez's decision to opt out has been so closely linked to a Betts trade, because people are beginning to forget how valuable Martinez has been over the last two years. Yes, he is limited defensively and won't impact the game on the basepaths, but Martinez is still one of the very best hitters in baseball and has an unquantifiable clubhouse presence.

In 296 games over the last two years, Martinez has hit .317/.392/.593 with a .985 OPS. He has been an All-Star in both seasons, won a World Series and helped countless teammates as a quasi-coach, obsessed with swings and improving them.

A drop in production is possible for Martinez, who turns 33 next season and dealt with a nagging back injury at times in 2019. But his obsessive process suggests he'll be able to be a productive player for at least a few more years.

Boston Red Sox roster moves: Dustin Pedroia, Chris Sale placed on 40-man roster, Juan Centeno becomes free agent

Christopher Smith

The Red Sox reinstated Dustin Pedroia and Chris Sale from the 60-day injured list Monday, placing them back on the 40-man roster.

Both are procedural moves for the Red Sox. But it shows Pedroia, as of now, still might attempt a comeback in 2020.

The 36-year-old second baseman has two years remaining on his contract. He has appeared in just nine games the past two seasons after undergoing a left knee cartilage restoration procedure Oct. 25, 2017. He continued to feel knee soreness while rehabbing in 2019.

He left the team June 1 to return to Arizona to be with his family and underwent a joint preservation procedure on his knee in early August. He kept the door open to returning in 2020 when he visited the team in Colorado on Aug. 27, but he also said he was focused on his quality of life.

CENTENO BECOMES FREE AGENT

The Red Sox outrighted catcher Juan Centeno off the 40-man roster. He elected free agency.

Boston's 40-man roster is at 34 players, including two catchers: Christian Vazquez and Sandy Leon.

*** *The Portland Press Herald***

With J.D. opting to stay, Mookie may become a Red Sox casualty

Tom Caron

Monday was J.D. Day for the Boston Red Sox. Slugger J.D. Martinez informed Chief Baseball Officer Chaim Bloom that he will be back with the team for the 2020 season, rather than opting for free agency.

The news is a double-edged sword for Bloom and General Manager Brian O'Halloran. It helps them maintain an offense that has been one of the best in the game over the past two seasons. But it makes it tougher to reach the franchise's stated goal of lowering payroll next season, when Martinez will make \$23.75 million.

Martinez has done everything the Red Sox could have hoped for when they signed him to a five-year, \$110 million contract in early 2018. He led all of baseball in RBI over the past two seasons. He hit more opposite-field home runs than anyone in the game. He posted a ridiculous .985 OPS over two seasons, and in 2018 became the first player ever to win two Silver Slugger Awards as the best hitter at two different positions (outfield and designated hitter).

Oh, and he helped lead the Red Sox to a championship.

It's easy to forget that the contract Martinez signed gave the Red Sox a lot of protection. He had dealt with a foot injury in the two seasons before joining Boston, so the team gave itself an opt-out in Years 3 and 4 of the deal if the injury recurred. It was an insurance policy of sorts, but it came at a price.

Martinez got himself a little protection, too. That's how he came to control his destiny, with language allowing him to opt out of the contract this fall – and he has opt-out clauses after the 2020 and 2021 seasons – in search of greener financial pastures. The final two years of the contract (2021 and 2022) drop to \$19.35 million per season.

Any team would want a bat like that in the lineup for years to come. Yet the Red Sox aren't just "any team." They had the highest payroll in baseball over those two years, and are paying an exorbitant price for it. The Red Sox future is as much about money spent as it is about runs scored. They want to reset their Competitive Balance Tax next season, getting below \$207 million – meaning someone's got to go.

That's why there's a very real chance the Red Sox will trade Mookie Betts in the coming months, even though he is undoubtedly one of the game's best players.

Having Martinez back in 2020 makes it even more difficult to bring Betts back into the fold. With money tied up in the DH, there's undoubtedly a stronger chance the Red Sox listen to offers for Betts, the Gold Glove-winning superstar. Betts made more than \$27 million last season and is arbitration-eligible again this winter.

Last week, Bloom spoke to Red Sox season ticket holders on a conference call I hosted. It didn't take long for the conversation to turn to Betts.

"I don't know yet what is going to happen," said Bloom. "We would certainly love to keep him in our uniform forever if we can. We're just going to have to see, once we have our arms around all the different options, what is the best thing for us.

"He's going to have to make that decision for himself, and we're going to have to decide what the best thing is – taking into account everything and all the trade-offs involved in these types of commitments – what's the best thing for the long term of the Boston Red Sox."

That long-term future is now coming into focus. Martinez is staying, and that's good news for the Red Sox offense. It just might not be good news for Sox fans who want Betts back in the lineup, too.

*** *RedSox.com***

J.D. Martinez won't opt out of contract (source)

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- Rather than opting out of his contract by Monday's deadline, J.D. Martinez has positioned himself to be back in the middle of the Red Sox's batting order next season.

A source told MLB.com's Mark Feinsand more than seven hours before the midnight deadline that Martinez decided not to exercise his opt-out clause.

It remains to be seen if Martinez's decision to stick with the Red Sox for at least another season will increase the chances of Boston trading Mookie Betts.

In late September, Red Sox owner John Henry expressed a preference for the Red Sox to get the payroll below the first luxury-tax threshold of \$208 million in 2020. In 2019, Boston's payroll was roughly \$240 million.

Red Sox president Sam Kennedy acknowledged the day after the regular season ended that it would be possible but “difficult” to have a 2020 roster that includes Martinez and Betts.

Martinez has three years and \$62.5 million left on the five-year pact he signed with Boston in Spring Training 2018. However, Martinez can also opt out following the '20 and '21 seasons.

In Martinez, the Red Sox have one of the best middle-of-the-order bats in the game. Over two seasons with Boston, the DH/OF has a line of .317/.392/.593 with 79 homers and 235 RBIs in 296 games.

As for Betts, he is entering his walk year. The Red Sox have tried to sign him to a long-term contract in the past, but Betts has been steadfast in his desire to test the market once he reaches free agency.

New chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom was keeping all options open last week when asked how the club will move forward with Betts.

There's also a chance the Sox could trade Martinez instead, but it could be risky to do so without a long-term commitment from Betts.

Monday was also the deadline for teams to present \$17.8 million qualifying offers to free agents, but the Red Sox didn't extend any.

The team's free-agent list includes righty Rick Porcello, first baseman Mitch Moreland, infielder/outfielder Brock Holt, righty Andrew Cashner and righty Jhoulys Chacin.

By not giving qualifying offers, it means the Red Sox won't receive Draft compensation should those players sign elsewhere.

Red Sox take Sale, Pedroia off 60-day IL

In moves that were more procedural than anything else, the Red Sox removed lefty Chris Sale and second baseman Dustin Pedroia from the 60-day injured list and put them back on the 40-man roster.

Sale's season ended in August due to left elbow inflammation. Pedroia has played just nine games for the Red Sox over the last two seasons due to recurring left knee woes. There's no word yet on whether he will be able to attempt a comeback in 2020. Pedroia has two years left on his contract.

Catcher Juan Centeno was outrighted from the Major League roster and became a free agent.

With the moves, Boston's 40-man roster is at 34.

10 named to Modern Baseball Era ballot for HOF

Matt Kelly

The National Baseball Hall of Fame announced 10 candidates under consideration for induction as part of the 2020 Modern Baseball Era ballot: Dwight Evans, Steve Garvey, Tommy John, Don Mattingly, Marvin Miller, Thurman Munson, Dale Murphy, Dave Parker, Ted Simmons and Lou Whitaker.

“Modern Baseball” is one of four rotating eras considered by the Hall of Fame's Veterans Committee that evaluates candidates whose primary contributions to baseball came between 1970-87. This year's ballot was compiled by 11 veteran baseball historians, and a 16-member electorate will vote on this year's candidates and announce potential electees on Dec. 8 at the Winter Meetings in San Diego. Candidates must receive votes from at least 75 percent of the ballots to gain election to the Hall.

Dwight Evans

Evans is a significant figure in Red Sox history, made three American League All-Star teams and won eight AL Gold Glove Awards and two AL Silver Slugger Awards in right field. He finished his 19-year career with a .370 OBP, 2,446 hits, 1,470 runs, 1,391 walks and 1,384 RBIs. Evans fell off the Baseball Writers' Association of America (BBWAA) ballot in 1999 after three attempts, cresting at 10.4 percent of the vote in '98. Red Sox ace David Price switched his uniform number from 24 to 10 prior to the 2019 season out of respect for Evans' tenure with Boston.

Steve Garvey

Garvey ranked among the game's best first baseman during his 19-year career with the Dodgers and Padres, finishing with 2,599 hits, 272 home runs, 1,308 RBIs and 10 National League All-Star team selections. He also earned numerous accolades including the 1974 NL Most Valuable Player Award, two NL Championship Series MVP Awards, two All-Star Game MVP Awards, four NL Gold Glove Awards and the '81 Roberto Clemente Award. Garvey logged an NL-record 1,207 consecutive games at first base from '75-83, and he led the Senior Circuit in hits in '78 and '80. He expired from BBWAA consideration after lasting the maximum 15 years on the ballot, peaking with 42.6 percent of the vote in '95. Garvey was also on the Modern Baseball Era ballot in 2017, but he received less than 50 percent of the vote.

Tommy John

John logged 26 seasons in the big leagues, and he won 288 combined games for the Indians, White Sox, Dodgers, Yankees, Angels and A's. He remains prominent today for the eponymous groundbreaking elbow surgery he received in 1974 that extended his career for another 15 years. A four-time All-Star, John tallied 20-plus wins in three seasons and helped the Dodgers and Yankees claim pennants in '77, '78 and '81, respectively. John lasted the maximum 15 years on the BBWAA ballot, cresting at 31.7 percent of the vote in his final year in 2009. He earned less than 50 percent of the vote on the last Modern Baseball Era ballot in '17.

Don Mattingly

Mattingly, the Marlins' manager, ascended to captain of the Yankees and was a beloved star during his 14-year career in the Bronx. He claimed the 1985 AL MVP Award, earned nine AL Gold Glove Awards and three AL Silver Slugger awards at first base and was named to six straight AL All-Star teams from 1984-89 before injuries began to take their toll in the latter half of his career. Mattingly also won the AL batting title in '84 and paced the Junior Circuit in hits in '84 and '86. A .307 hitter lifetime, Mattingly fell off the BBWAA ballot in 2015 after lasting the maximum 15 years, and he enjoyed his strongest showing when he debuted with 28.2 percent of the vote in '01. He fell shy of 50 percent on the last Modern Baseball Era ballot in '17.

Marvin Miller

Miller is known as one of the most prominent figures in sports labor history after securing free agency for players and ridding them of the former reserve clause system in the mid-1970s. The Hall notes that the average player salary increased by roughly tenfold under his tenure as head of the Major League Baseball Players Association from 1966-82. Miller earned seven of the 12 votes (43.8 percent) needed for election during the last Modern Baseball Era ballot in 2017.

Thurman Munson

Munson, like Mattingly, was a beloved captain of the Yankees as they returned to prominence in the late 1970s. The fiery catcher earned both the AL Rookie of the Year Award (1970) and the AL MVP Award ('76) during his 11 big league seasons, and he was named to the AL All-Star team seven times while also capturing three AL Gold Glove Awards behind the plate. Munson helped lead the pinstripes to back-to-back World Series championships in '77 and '78 before tragically passing away in a plane crash in the summer of '79. The BBWAA waived the typical five-year waiting period and placed Munson on the ballot in '81, and he crested at 15.5 percent of the vote before eventually falling off the ballot in '95. Munson also fell short of election on three Veterans Committee ballots between 2003-07.

Dale Murphy

Murphy was a back-to-back NL MVP Award winner with the Braves in 1982 and '83, and he finished his 18-year career with 398 home runs and 1,266 RBIs. He was named to seven NL All-Star teams, and he

claimed five NL Gold Glove Awards and four NL Silver Slugger Awards in center field for Atlanta. Murphy debuted on the BBWAA ballot in '99 and crested with 23.2 percent of the vote the following year before falling off after a maximum 15-year stay in '13. He earned less than 50 percent of the vote the last time the Modern Baseball Era committee voted in '17.

Dave Parker

Parker combined a powerful bat at the plate with a powerful arm in right field over 19 years with the Pirates, Reds, A's, Brewers, Angels and Blue Jays. He finished with 339 homers, 1,493 RBIs and two NL batting titles in 1977 and '78, winning the league's MVP Award in the latter year. Parker helped lead the "We Are Family" Pirates to their World Series championship in '79 before helping the A's win it all 10 years later. Parker lasted the maximum 15 years on the BBWAA ballot before falling off in 2011, cresting at 24.5 percent in 1998. He also fell short of 50 percent on the Modern Baseball Era ballot in 2017.

Ted Simmons

Simmons fell just one vote shy of election when the Modern Baseball Era committee voted two years ago. The catcher hit .285 and tallied 2,472 hits, 483 doubles, 248 homers and 1,389 RBIs over 21 seasons with the Cardinals, Brewers and Braves, and he helped Milwaukee reach the World Series in 1982. Simmons was an eight-time All-Star, and he captured his lone NL Silver Slugger Award after batting .303 and knocking 21 homers for St. Louis in '80. He lasted just one year on the BBWAA ballot after netting 3.7 percent of the vote in '94.

Lou Whitaker

Whitaker formed one of baseball's most famous double-play combinations alongside 2018 Hall of Fame inductee Alan Trammell in Detroit from 1977-95. The '78 AL Rookie of the Year Award winner compiled 2,369 hits, 244 homers and 1,197 walks while earning five AL All-Star team nods, four AL Silver Slugger Awards and three AL Gold Glove Awards at second base -- the position that he manned in every game in which he appeared in the field (he also logged 32 career games as a designated hitter). Additionally, Whitaker was a key member of the Tigers' most recent World Series championship team in '84. He fell off the BBWAA ballot after earning 2.9 percent of the vote in his 2001 debut, and he was not on the ballot when the Modern Baseball Era committee voted two years ago.

*** *ESPN.com***

What does J.D. Martinez's opt-in mean for Red Sox and Mookie Betts?

Joon Lee

The first domino in a long and complicated offseason fell for the Red Sox on Monday, as slugger J.D. Martinez decided not to test free agency, meaning Boston's biggest run producer in recent years will be back for at least one more season -- presuming he isn't traded first.

Questions about the designated hitter's future loomed for months dating back to the summer, and they heated up when Boston began falling out of playoff contention. Martinez, 32, has three years and \$62.5 million left on his contract, putting Chaim Bloom, Boston's new chief baseball officer, in position to make the first major decisions of his tenure, with the ramifications of Martinez's decision generating ripple effects throughout the organization.

A major theme of Boston's offseason is owner John Henry's publicly stated desire to reduce the team's payroll under next year's luxury tax threshold of \$208 million. The Red Sox led the majors in payroll the past two seasons, which includes their World Series title run in 2018.

Here are a few questions Martinez's opt-in raises:

What did Martinez decide and why?

Martinez negotiated the ability to opt out of his contract before each of the last three seasons of the five-year, \$110 million deal he signed before the 2018 season. With Martinez opting in, at least for one more season, Boston retains one of the elite sluggers in baseball, one who has hit 317/.392/.593 with 79 homers, 70 doubles and 235 RBIs in 296 games the past two seasons. Still, those luxury tax issues remain.

Boston owes Martinez \$23.75 million for 2020, and will likely face the same opt-out dance next offseason, when Martinez can once again test free agency. Martinez's entire \$23.75 million salary will count against Boston's luxury tax bill, versus his average annual salary of \$22 million because the final two years of the slugger's contract are conditional on health.

Martinez's decision to stay shifts the direction of Boston's offseason. Bloom could look to trade Martinez, a move that would save more money for the organization than an opt-out would have, since there'd be no \$2.5 million buyout involved. Bloom could also look to make the difficult decision and explore a trade for Mookie Betts, although any decision to trade the four-time Gold Glove outfielder and 2018 AL MVP would likely be for cents on the dollar and mean trading the most popular active athlete in Boston whose name isn't Tom Brady. Betts is entering the final season of his contract with the Red Sox, primed to make around \$30 million in 2020.

Bloom could also explore the trade market for the team's starting pitching, with Chris Sale's five-year, \$145 million extension kicking in at the start of 2020, Nathan Eovaldi owed \$68 million over three years and David Price on the payroll for another three years and \$96 million. All have injury concerns of varying degrees, though a recent report from the Dallas Morning News suggested the Texas Rangers have had internal discussions about pursuing a Boston starter via trade.

Regardless of whether or not he stayed, Martinez was not going to be the No. 1 priority in an offseason where Boston's two other biggest quandaries -- figuring out Betts' future and the luxury tax situation -- dominate. Had Martinez opted out, Boston likely would have let their cleanup hitter walk in free agency, given the plethora of bats on the open market who would cost less and still produce runs.

Still, the impact of Martinez's bat in the middle of Boston's lineup can't be overstated. Following the retirement of David Ortiz, who hit .315/.401/.620 with 38 homers and 48 doubles in his age 40 season, Boston slid Hanley Ramirez into the DH slot in 2017, where he hit .242/.320/.429 with 23 homers, while the top of the lineup took a step back. Betts hit .264 a season after finishing as MVP runner-up and Xander Bogaerts hit just 10 homers in 148 games. Martinez has locked down the middle of the lineup, and in 2020, Boston will look for increased production from Andrew Benintendi, while others, like Rafael Devers and Bogaerts, will need to maintain their outputs from their breakout 2019 seasons.

But Boston's highest-profile priority remains the future of Betts in Boston. Bloom didn't tip his hand in regard to Betts or Martinez during his introductory news conference, but he echoed the message of ownership, which wants to build an organization that emphasizes the long view.

"I would say generally, our top priority is going to be sustainability and competitiveness over the long term," Bloom said. "And that could take many forms, but that's really going to be the top priority as we think about moves. With respect to those two guys, I'm just coming in here and there's a lot that I don't know, and I'm looking forward to building relationships with them and learning a little bit more about them from everybody here."

*** *WEEI.com***

J.D. Martinez decides not to opt-out of deal with Red Sox

Rob Bradford

J.D. Martinez has decided to stick around at least one more year.

According to multiple reports the 32-year-old is choosing to not use his opportunity to opt-out of a current deal with the Red Sox that is guaranteed to pay him \$62.5 million over the next three seasons. Martinez will make \$23.75 million in 2020. He does have another opportunity to opt-out following next season as well, with his number dropping to \$19.375 million in 2021 and '22.

Martinez's continued presence in the Sox' batting order obviously helps Alex Cora's team's chances for the coming season.

During his two seasons with the Red Sox he managed to fill the middle-of-the-order void left behind by David Ortiz after the slugger's retirement following the 2016 season. During that span he totaled the fourth-best OPS (.985) in baseball, only behind Mike Trout, Christian Yelich and Mookie Betts.

Martinez also managed more total bases than anyone in MLB while playing for Boston, also finishing the two-year stint with a combined .317 batting average and 79 homers (the 4th-most of any big leaguer).

The Red Sox went 56-18 in games Martinez hit at least one home run, 109-32 when he managed one RBI or more and 151-79 on occasions he came away with at least one hit.

Along with his presence in the clubhouse and the batting cages Martinez was just what the doctor ordered.

It does, however, make a tricky payroll situation even more difficult.

With the team's desired goal to drop below the \$208 million luxury tax threshold, Martinez's money puts the Red Sox in a bind when it comes to allocating resources to a Mookie Betts contract extension and other pieces of the roster-building process.

*** *NBC Sports Boston***

Red Sox star J.D. Martinez won't opt out of contract in 2019

Nick Goss

The Boston Red Sox's offseason can now proceed.

The first major domino to fall for the Red Sox this winter was J.D. Martinez deciding whether to opt out of his contract. He had until 11:59 p.m. ET Monday night to opt out of his deal and become an unrestricted free agent, but ESPN's Jeff Passan reports the veteran slugger will not opt out. NBC Sports Boston's John Tomase confirmed ESPN's report.

Martinez signed a five-year contract worth \$110 million with the Red Sox before the 2018 campaign -- one that includes several different opt-out years, including after the 2020 season.

He finished fourth in AL MVP voting in 2018 as a key member of a Red Sox team that won a club-record 108 games and the World Series. Martinez enjoyed plenty of success in 2019, too, batting .304 with 36 home runs, 105 RBI and a .383 on-base percentage in 145 games.

His return could have huge implications for the rest of the roster. The Red Sox want to cut payroll, and with Martinez's large salary remaining on the books, did a Mookie Betts trade just become more likely? The All-Star outfielder can become a free agent after the 2021 campaign, but if the Red Sox aren't able to work out an extension with him in the near future, trading him now and getting a bunch of quality prospects/MLB players in return would be ideal.

Red Sox legend Dwight Evans on Modern Era ballot for Hall of Fame

Dave Green

Dwight Evans has already been enshrined in the Red Sox Hall of Fame — but will he find his way to Cooperstown?

Arguably the greatest defensive player in Red Sox history, Evans is one of 10 candidates on this year's Modern Era ballot for the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Evans didn't fare well on the general ballot after retiring in 1992, as he was dropped from consideration after just three times on the ballot after not reaching the minimum five percent of the vote threshold in 1999.

The man known as Dewey patrolled right field for the Sox from 1972 to 1990, winning eight Gold Gloves, and making three All-Star teams during his Red Sox career. Only Carl Yastrzemski played more games in a Sox uniform than Evans, who still ranks fifth in team history in both home runs (379) and RBIs (1,346).

Evans is joined on the ballot by Steve Garvey, Tommy John, Don Mattingly, Thurman Munson, Dale Murphy, Dave Parker, Ted Simmons, Lou Whitaker, and Marvin Miller.

A 16-member Modern Era committee will consider the candidates, and 75 percent of the vote is required for induction. Voting will take place MLB's Winter Meetings, with the results scheduled to be announced on December 8.

*** *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

Five thoughts on J.D. Martinez's decision to not opt out & possible Betts fallout

Sean McAdam

J.D. Martinez surprised a lot of people with his decision to not opt-out of his contract with the Red Sox on Monday. Officially, Martinez had until midnight to decide, but work broke shortly before 5 p.m.

Martinez has \$62.5 million remaining over the next three years, though he can choose to opt out after 2020 and 2021, too.

He'll make \$23.75 million in 2020, with that same number serving as the Red Sox charge toward the CBT (competitive balance tax).

Here are five thoughts on the news and the fallout:

1. Martinez (and Scott Boras) made the right call.

For months, I was convinced that Martinez would not opt out. To me, it made no sense to sacrifice that money for the next three years, given how the market has treated 30-something position players the last two years, to say nothing of one who is, his protests to the contrary, effectively a DH.

In recent weeks, I let myself get talked into thinking he was opting out, because so many people around the game — other talent evaluators, executives — treated it as a fait accompli.

I still had difficulty thinking that he would improve on those numbers elsewhere. Not in this climate, not when the 30-homer slugger isn't quite as rare, not with half the teams out of the bidding, and not with many teams preferring to spread the DH at-bats around.

Boras usually reads the market pretty well. He did again here.

2. The Red Sox payroll crunch just got tighter.

With Martinez staying, the Sox have about \$133 million committed to seven players. Add another half-dozen or so with big jumps for arbitration there's another \$60 million. Now, add in players with 1-3 years of service time, factor in player benefits (\$15 million) and rounding out the roster and you're easily past the \$208 million threshold — before you begin to account for a single new addition.

Red Sox ownership and upper management keeps stressing that getting under that threshold to reset their tax rate going forward is ... everybody now ... “a goal, not a mandate.” But it seems fairly obvious the Sox much prefer to be under and will make a concerted effort to get there.

3. Yes, Martinez returning might mean Mookie Betts leaving.

The day after the 2019 season ended, team president and CEO Sam Kennedy was asked if there was a way to retain both Betts and Martinez.

“There's a way,” conceded Kennedy, “but obviously, it's very difficult.”

We're about to see exactly how difficult. What we know is that, together, the two are scheduled to make approximately \$51.5 million in 2020 — \$23.75 for Martinez, with a projection of a \$27.7 million salary arbitration figure for Betts. That's almost exactly 25 percent of the \$208 figure under which the Sox hope to land for just two players.

That's not exactly an efficient outlay for a team in cost-cutting mode.

It's possible that the option of having Martinez in the lineup for at least another year makes it slightly more palatable for the team to shop Betts. A lineup featuring Rafael Devers, Xander Bogaerts, Andrew Benintendi and Martinez is a pretty formidable offensive foundation and might make moving Betts slightly less onerous.

Then again...

4. It might mean that Martinez himself is traded.

There's nothing to stop the Red Sox from turning around and trading Martinez.

Martinez has a limited no-trade clause that allows him to choose up to three teams to whom he cannot be dealt. Such lists are typically revised and submitted in November.

But there are two roadblocks to a Martinez deal:

The same market that limited Martinez's options as a prospective free agent also (mostly) apply to his trade value. Martinez has little appeal to National League teams, leaving the other 14 AL teams as potential landing spots. But the Sox aren't going to deal with the Yankees, so that's reduced to 13. And Martinez will likely choose wisely when it comes to identifying his three no-trade teams — selecting from only AL teams, and only teams for whom he might be a fit. Now we're down to 10 — approximately half of which (Tampa Bay, Baltimore, Kansas City, Cleveland, Oakland) either can't afford him or have no DH availability. That brings us to five. See where this is heading?

The return for Martinez in a deal won't be great because of a lack of control. He can opt out of his deal again next year, and the year after that, too. That means that any team trading for him does so knowing that they have only one year of control guaranteed. And as we've seen, teams are reluctant to give up much for rentals — which is what Martinez represents. Yes, he might not opt-out next year, but a team dealing for him can't be assured of that.

Given the above, it's possible that Red Sox could be willing to pay down, say, \$7 million or so, and still save more than \$15 million in payroll without worrying too much about what they get in return.

5. The mere decision by Martinez to not opt out suggests he's overpriced on today's market.

It's a simple formula: If Martinez (and Boras) thought there was more money to be made, he would have opted out in a heartbeat. That they came to the determination that they couldn't improve on the current contract suggests that the contract is out of whack with the current landscape.

Yes, Martinez is an excellent offensive performer. In his two seasons with the Red Sox, he's hit 79 homers and knocked in 235 runs. But this season, 58 MLB players hit 30 or more homers. And there's this: in each of the last two seasons, Martinez's slugging percentage and OPS dropped from the previous year.

That doesn't mean he's not a worthwhile addition to the lineup. Last season, in something of a down year, he had an OPS+ of 140, meaning that, adjusting for ballpark and other factors, he was 40 percent better than the average hitter.

But his decision to keep his money indicates he knows he already has the best deal he could get — and by extension, that he's at least somewhat overpaid.

*** *The Athletic***

Four questions raised by J.D. Martinez's decision

Jen McCaffrey

Now that J.D. Martinez has decided to remain with the Red Sox, the one thing we know for certain is that he won't be hitting free agency this winter.

In 146 games this year, Martinez hit .304 with a .939 OPS, 33 doubles and 36 homers while driving in 105 runs. His presence in the lineup the past two seasons has allowed Rafael Devers, Xander Bogaerts and even Mookie Betts to further develop as they've watched the way he approaches and prepares for each game.

But his return doesn't mean everything is settled. Far from it. One of the first big roster questions of the Red Sox offseason has been answered, but it only leads to other questions:

First, why did Martinez opt in, anyway?

The 32-year-old slugger, whose outfield defense is average at best, knows he's one of the best designated hitters in the game. He also knows that even being one of the best at his position, it still took him the entire 2017-18 offseason to agree to a deal he felt suited his value. Top-tier free agents have found a sluggish market, at best, the past few winters, and Martinez going unsigned until February 2018 was just one example of that situation.

Just as with David Price, who had a player option he exercised last winter, Martinez understands the uncertainty of the open market. When you have a boatload of guaranteed money in front of you on a team that has been successful in the recent past, the incentive to stay and clear those checks becomes even greater. Martinez is familiar with the system and the people in Boston and has found success over the past few seasons in a difficult, but rewarding atmosphere, so why test the market again when the money might not be there?

But there's still a chance the Red Sox trade him, right?

In a word: Yes.

How does this affect the Red Sox payroll?

A payroll that includes Martinez's \$23.75 million salary and Betts' projected arbitration earnings of \$27 million would mean the Red Sox sit somewhere in the \$213 million range. (That includes guaranteed contracts for 2020 and other salary arbitration projections.)

Even without adding a starting pitcher, and a first baseman or second baseman, the \$213 million is already above the luxury tax reset threshold of \$208 million the Red Sox hope to get under for next season. Adding through free agency will bump up the payroll significantly, and trading for any of their needs will create holes elsewhere.

Maybe the Red Sox will push off their goal of getting below the luxury tax threshold until next winter. After all, the idea they “had” to get under a certain number has been blown a bit out of proportion. Ownership initially stated its goal of getting under the \$208 million line before rephrasing it as a goal but not a mandate. They hope to reset their payroll, but remaining competitive is more of a priority. The money is there, so maybe they hold off on their payroll reset for one more year.

What about Mookie Betts? What does this mean for him?

If Martinez had opted out and the Red Sox were on the market for a new DH, trading Betts would have seemed more challenging because the team would then have to replace the two biggest bats in the lineup.

But now that we know Martinez has opted to stay, trading Betts becomes more of an option. Again, it goes back to three things:

How serious is ownership about shedding payroll?

Could the team maintain its competitiveness in the division without one of the best players in the game?

Do the Red Sox think they can get a long-term deal done with Betts under the new guidance of Chaim Bloom or do they want to ensure they get some return for Betts before free agency next winter?

If they feel they can't sign Betts, the Red Sox could go for one final push with Betts and Martinez in the lineup. Or they could start the process now and trade him for prospects or young major league talent in the hopes Martinez's bat can carry them and Bogaerts and Devers can replicate their impressive 2019 seasons.

Now that J.D. Martinez has decided to stay, should the Red Sox explore dealing him?

Chad Jennings

The Red Sox' least predictable player just became their most powerful trade chip.

J.D. Martinez informed the team on Monday that he will not opt out of his current contract. He instead will return for a third season, earning another \$23.75 million before facing another opt-out opportunity next winter. His five-year, \$110-million contract has been, thus far, a win-win for both player and organization. Martinez has solidified his status as one of the game's elite hitters, while the Red Sox have won a championship and embraced a Martinez-driven culture of mechanics and analytics. It's been an ideal fit.

But in September ownership declared its desire to trim payroll and improve player development, and trading Martinez would be an opportunity to do both.

Like every other money-saving trade candidate on the Red Sox roster, Martinez's market value is somewhat flawed. The market for David Price and Nathan Eovaldi is limited by the size of their contracts, the market for Jackie Bradley Jr. is limited by his offensive inconsistency and upcoming free agency, and the market for Mookie Betts is limited by his projected \$28 million salary and the fact he seems hellbent on hitting the open market next winter. Finding a trade partner for those players is tricky. The same is true for Martinez.

If he were significantly underpaid, Martinez surely would have opted for free agency, so there's not a lot of excess value in his contract. Any team acquiring him would have to acknowledge the fact he could walk away after a year, so it would need to be a contender, and that team would also have to recognize his defensive limitations, which means the American League is the most natural fit.

But Martinez remains one of the best hitters in the game, and his contract isn't particularly problematic, and the free agent market isn't exactly overflowing with hitters of his caliber. Surely there are teams willing to

give up something to get him, and if the Red Sox can trade him, they can shed his salary without paying the \$2.5 million buyout that would have kicked in with an opt-out.

Again, it's a win-win – if the Red Sox can find a partner.

The most obvious place to start would be Chicago. Last offseason, the White Sox lost out on free agent Manny Machado, and their general manager Rick Hahn immediately sought to dispel the notion that his team was not willing to pay for premier talent.

“The money will be spent,” he said.

Less than a year later, that money is still available. The White Sox have roughly \$50 million in payroll commitments for 2020. In the past decade, they've shown a willingness to go well over \$100 million. Hahn also has specifically cited both right field and designated hitter as targets for immediate improvement. Martinez could certainly fill the latter and could occasionally help out in the corners.

The White Sox also have talent to give. Their elite young players are surely off the table for a potential rental – no visions of Luis Robert or Nick Madrigal coming the Red Sox way – but the White Sox do have quite a few young starting pitchers who either underperformed or were hurt in 2019. Among them was 25-year-old Reynaldo Lopez, who became a source of frustration. Perhaps the Red Sox could find a way to get one of those pitchers involved to fill an immediate need. If not, the Red Sox could be satisfied with a lesser prospect or two, which would still be more return than they would have gotten if Martinez had opted out.

Other teams in the market for a designated hitter are more complicated. The Yankees had been mentioned as a possible suitor had Martinez hit the open market, but good luck making that kind of trade between rivals. The Rays and Blue Jays could also use a designated hitter, but they too are in the Red Sox division and perhaps less likely to offer the best bang for the buck. Most National League teams would be, presumably, uninterested given Martinez's defensive issues, but the Mets and Phillies are each in a win-now mode and have been known to go against convention. They're worth a phone call.

Whatever the result, control has shifted. Before announcing his decision for 2020, Martinez had the power in this situation. Now, it's the Red Sox who will determine the next course of action. They can always stick with Martinez, accepting his salary because his bat will be nearly impossible to replace. Limited no-trade protection could complicate, though perhaps not derail, trade possibilities. If the Red Sox choose to keep Martinez, it could mean trading Betts to curb spending or accepting another year of heightened luxury tax charges. Again, it's up to the Red Sox.

But the trade market could be tempting. Just a few hours ago, it seemed the Red Sox could lose Martinez and get nothing in return. Indeed, the team would have owed him a \$2.5-million buyout. Now, the Red Sox can explore their options. Even a modest return would be better than the opt-out.

Storylines to watch this offseason, from the Boras Brigade to the Red Sox's decision on Mookie Betts

Ken Rosenthal

Every year at this time, people ask me if the offseason will be crazy. And every year I assure them, “Don't worry, it will be completely insane.”

Now, there are different levels of insanity — most of the nuttiness last winter stemmed from the stalemate between teams and top free agents that delayed a number of big signings until February.

But if you're wondering, “Will we be shocked?” yes, we will be shocked. We always get shocked, one way or another. No one anticipated the Mets' wild trade with the Mariners last offseason, or the Padres' signing of Manny Machado, among many other moves.

With that, here the top storylines entering the 2019-20 offseason. And rest assured, the storylines exiting the offseason will be entirely different.

The Boras Brigade

It's like a game of Monopoly, agent-style. Jim Bowden's top three free agents for The Athletic, and five of his top nine, are represented by Scott Boras, which probably means it's safe to nap until January.

Then again, maybe not.

Boras might be motivated to act quickly on certain players to clear paths for others. His free agents include the top two right-handed starting pitchers (Gerrit Cole and Stephen Strasburg), two of the top left-handers (Hyun-Jin Ryu and Dallas Keuchel) and two of the top third basemen (Anthony Rendon and Mike Moustakas), as well as the youngest hitter on the market, Nicholas Castellanos, 27.

If, for example, Strasburg does not re-sign with the Nationals quickly, Boras could run up the bidding for Cole and take him off the board, say, by late December. He then would know what all the suitors would be willing to pay Cole and could direct those teams to Strasburg.

Of course, that is only one possibility. Boras also could place Strasburg relatively quickly with one of the teams reluctant to commit to Cole, or re-sign him with the Nationals. Cole then would have the rest of the market to himself, and Boras could drag out the bidding as long as he deems necessary.

One big question: How intent is Cole on playing for a team that, in the words of his former Astros teammate Josh Reddick, is "west of Nevada"? Boras clients typically go to the highest bidder, and Cole is certain to generate interest across baseball.

The Phillies are one likely suitor, and they've signed Boras clients — Jake Arrieta and Bryce Harper — in each of the past two offseasons. They could strike the same type of deal with Cole that they did with Harper, agreeing on the size of the guarantee, then spreading it over a large number of years to reduce the luxury-tax burden.

One executive says the dream scenario for Boras is to have six teams bidding on four of his top free agents in January with no better alternatives.

Could happen. Maybe it's best to take that long nap after all.

Available — and not wearing a cap from the Boras Corporation

Despite the above item, the vast majority of the 154 free agents are not actually represented by Boras. And though most of those players, unlike Cole, do not wear their agencies' merch (if such merch even exists), many of them will generate attention anyway.

Bowden listed left-hander Madison Bumgarner at No. 4 in his top 35, outfielder Marcell Ozuna at No. 5, righty Zack Wheeler at No. 6, third baseman Josh Donaldson at No. 8 and catcher Yasmani Grandal at No. 10.

Such rankings are subjective; Ozuna perhaps should be lower, Grandal higher. Grandal, in fact, might come out ahead after rejecting a four-year, \$60 million offer from the Mets last season and signing with the Brewers for one year and \$18.25 million.

To beat the Mets' proposal, Grandal would need to sign for more than \$41.75 million. Such a deal should be within reach, especially since Grandal was exempt from receiving another qualifying offer — he is entering his age 31 season, but he is by far the best free-agent catcher, a switch-hitter who offers both offensive and defensive value.

Donaldson is another fascinating case. He accepted a one-year, \$23 million deal from the Braves last offseason to set himself up for a bigger payday this time around. In theory, he accomplished his mission,

hitting 37 homers with a .900 OPS and leading NL third baseman in defensive runs saved. But with a qualifying offer attached, and entering his age-34 season, will he command a lucrative three-year deal?

Mookie Betts

J.D. Martinez's decision to stay with the Red Sox and collect his \$23.75 million salary will make it more difficult for the team to achieve its goal of getting under the \$208 million luxury-tax threshold — and perhaps increase the motivation to trade Betts, who is projected to make \$27.7 million in arbitration, according to MLBTradeRumors.com.

Rival executives express doubt that any suitor will want to take on that salary and part with quality prospects to keep Betts for only one season before he reaches free agency. Some team, though, might be wise to make such a move. Betts, over his five full seasons, has averaged \$56.7 million in value, according to FanGraphs' dollars metric, which converts Wins Above Replacement to a dollar scale based upon what a player would make in free agency. In other words, he's walking surplus value, even at a salary approaching \$30 million.

Still, clubs dread trading prospects, and perhaps the only way a team would make such a deal would be if the Red Sox granted a negotiating window to sign Betts to a long-term extension. Most clubs in the Red Sox's position are loath to agree to such a condition, knowing their leverage will be compromised if news of the proposed trade becomes public and the deal falls apart. Besides, Betts has refused numerous long-term offers from the Red Sox and seems intent on hitting the open market.

So, the Sox are in a pickle. Trading Betts would be not only unpopular but also counter-productive for a team that intends to rebound in 2020. Trading Martinez, meanwhile, would be difficult for the reasons that persuaded him not to opt out — a market that is limited to AL clubs, and the fact he is owed \$62.5 million over three years entering his age-32 season.

A better path might be to move left-hander David Price, who is owed \$96 million over the next three years, or righty Nathan Eovaldi, who is owed \$51 million over the next three. Impossible, you say? Well, what if the Red Sox included cash in a trade and also attached left fielder Andrew Benintendi, who remains cost-effective as he enters his first year of arbitration?

One way or another, the Sox's new chief baseball officer, Chaim Bloom, will need to be creative. A trade of center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr., projected to earn \$11 million in his final year before free agency, seems all but certain. The Sox can replace him by dealing for the much more affordable Jake Marisnick — manager Alex Cora previously was Marisnick's bench coach with the Astros — and pursuing a relatively inexpensive free-agent first baseman such as switch-hitter Justin Smoak to replace free agents Mitch Moreland and Steve Pearce.

Options abound, including a trade of Betts at the deadline if the Sox fail to contend. Think Bloom has a headache yet?

Pressure points

Good news! A number of teams that spent the past several seasons floundering or rebuilding face increasing pressure to win — pressure that likely will compel them to be more aggressive in pursuing upgrades.

- Padres. Even before executive chairman Ron Fowler announced “heads will roll, beginning with mine” if the team does not improve in 2020, the Padres had replaced manager Andy Green with another first-timer, Jayce Tingler. General manager A.J. Preller might not be as flexible financially after spending nearly \$450 million on third baseman Manny Machado and first baseman Eric Hosmer the past two offseasons. But it's time for Preller to field a more competitive club — the Pads have averaged 92 losses in his five seasons and endured nine straight losing campaigns overall.

- White Sox. GM Rick Hahn said the White Sox eventually would spend the \$250 million they offered Machado last February, and it can't happen quickly enough. The Sox are coming off their seventh straight

losing season, though a number of their younger players (Lucas Giolito, Yoan Moncada, Eloy Jiménez) broke out and more hitters (Luis Robert, Nick Madrigal) are on the way. Fortify that group with at least one starting pitcher, a right fielder and additional bullpen help, and the Sox might actually be in a position to surprise.

- Angels. They did not hire Joe Maddon as manager to punt on 2020. They did not sign center fielder Mike Trout to a 12-year, \$426.5 million extension to make him a mere showpiece. GM Billy Eppler is entering the last year of his contract, and owner Arte Moreno is fed up with four straight losing seasons. Calling Cole, Strasburg, someone, anyone.

- Rangers. As if three straight losing seasons are not enough incentive, the Rangers also are opening a new ballpark. It's doubtful a spending spree would launch the team into contention — too many areas require improvement — but the front office at least needs to start the process. Trade outfielder Nomar Mazara. Find undervalued free agents similar to Mike Minor and Lance Lynn. And address third base, whether it's with Rendon or someone else.

- Blue Jays. Club president Mark Shapiro recently told reporters, "It's not a great offseason for free-agent talent." Maybe so, but the Blue Jays have only \$29.93 million committed for next season, nearly half of it going to Troy Tulowitzki, who is no longer active. The Jays would be negligent if they do not start adding pitching to their exciting core of young position players.

Labor issues

At this point, it's not clear whether Major League Baseball and the players' union would agree that the Nationals won the World Series, much less anything of actual significance for the evolution of the sport.

Pace of action is a problem not just on the field but also off it — both sides believe it would be beneficial if the free-agent market moved at a faster pace. But as The Athletic's Evan Drellich recently reported, the players and owners have completely different ideas about how to achieve such a goal.

Baseball proposed a deadline for signing players to multiyear deals, perhaps at the end of the winter meetings. The union, opposing any such restrictions on the market, would prefer ideas similar to the ones Boras suggested to Drellich — draft-pick incentives, luxury-tax exemptions, and so on.

Such concepts, in baseball's view, affect the overall economic equation, making them nonstarters until a larger discussion about the game's salary structure can take place. So, at least for now, the possibility of a breakneck NFL- or NBA-style free-agency is out of reach (the salary caps in both of those leagues help force the action; baseball lacks a hard cap).

One agent says it's no coincidence baseball suggested a signing deadline — if only on a one-year experimental basis — at a time when the notoriously deliberate Boras controls so many top free agents. Another favors a second trade deadline rather than a signing deadline, believing teams would become more active on free agents if they no longer were distracted by potential trades.

According to sources, baseball was willing to negotiate the particulars of the signing deadline, perhaps making it only for contracts of three years or longer so that unsigned players would not only be limited to one-year deals. But as is the case with so many issues — including larger, more meaningful economic issues — the two sides are not even speaking the same language.

Remaining openings

Hiring season, at least for the big jobs, is nearly over. Six teams have named new managers. The Red Sox named Chaim Bloom their chief baseball officer. Only the Giants and Pirates remain in flux, and both are looking for GMs and managers.

The Giants' search for a GM to work under president of baseball operations Farhan Zaidi remains a mystery, but NBC Sports Bay Area reported that the managerial search is down to three finalists — former

Phillies manager Gabe Kapler, Royals quality control coach Pedro Grifol and Astros bench coach Joe Espada.

The Pirates have hired a consulting firm, Korn Ferry, to conduct their GM search, sources say. Korn Ferry helped placed Zaidi as well as Brewers GM David Stearns and Twins chief baseball officer Derek Falvey. Once the GM is hired, the team will resume its search for a manager — a search that began under former GM Neal Huntington.

Don't ask. No one in baseball can figure out the Pirates, either.

The Cubs' direction

Parting with manager Joe Maddon was one way for the Cubs to address their malaise. The question now is whether the team is truly intent on shaking up its core of position players, a strategy that might lead to trades of third baseman Kris Bryant (two years of club control remaining), catcher Willson Contreras (three) or others.

The hiring of David Ross, a first-time manager, might reflect a willingness by the front office to take a step back and allow Ross to grow with the next great Cubs team, particularly if ownership's financial restrictions from last offseason remain in place. On the flip side, president of baseball operations Theo Epstein has only two years left on his contract and has given little indication that he is willing to launch even a limited rebuild.

The Cubs have yet to sign any of their young hitters to extensions, so their strategy might hinge in part on whether they can reach a long-term agreement with, say, shortstop Javier Báez. Even then, trading Bryant would be complicated. Any team acquiring Bryant would know that, with Boras as his agent, he likely would depart as a free agent after two years — and perhaps after one, in the (seemingly unlikely) event that Bryant wins his service-time grievance against the club.

If the Cubs moved Contreras — ideally, for a starting pitcher with comparable control — they could perhaps sign a free agent to pair with Victor Caratini. If they traded Contreras and Bryant, they would free up approximately \$23 million in projected salaries in arbitration, enough to sign a high-end starting pitcher.

The Indians' big decision

The Indians likely will trade shortstop Francisco Lindor at some point. It just might not happen this offseason.

The team's lack of confidence in signing Lindor long-term became obvious last March when owner Paul Dolan told The Athletic's Zack Meisel that he would advise fans to "enjoy" the All-Star shortstop during the time he remained under club control — three seasons then, two now.

Like the Rays, the Indians routinely gauge interest in all of their players, building a database of information that informs their models on how to proceed in trade discussions. Perhaps they could land the type of hybrid return for Lindor that they received for right-hander Trevor Bauer last July, five players to help short- and long-term. But if such a deal is not available, the front office could reassess its position at the deadline and revisit talks then, following the same blueprint it did with Bauer.

The complicating aspect is that the Indians almost certainly would contend in the weak AL Central with Lindor, and perhaps even without him. With right-hander Corey Kluber and first baseman Carlos Santana on expiring contracts, the Indians might view 2020 as something of a last hurrah. But if they kept Lindor all season, they would be in the same position next offseason that the Red Sox are in with Betts — a position that would cost them leverage they cannot afford to lose.

The ball

For a time during the postseason, it seemed that the Rocket Ball had turned into the Horse-and-Buggy Ball. Cardinals manager Mike Shildt said on Oct. 12 that his team's analytics department had determined the ball

was traveling 4.5 fewer feet in the playoffs than during the regular season. The warning track, as The Athletic's Marc Carig repeatedly pointed out on Twitter, was the breakout star of October.

But maybe, as commissioner Rob Manfred argued, the ball wasn't de-juiced after all. The home-run rate (home runs per at-bat) dropped 6.1 percent from the regular season to the postseason, less than the 7 percent decrease in 2018 and a significant departure from the 12.7 percent increase in '17. Declines are expected during the playoffs due to the better quality of pitching. But if the ball had been de-juiced, the rate of decline in 2019 would figure to be higher than in the previous two years, not lower.

Still, the regular-season ball, at least, remains a source of concern, with Manfred telling Forbes at the end of September, "The only thing I'm prepared to say at this point in time is I do think that we need to see if we can make some changes that give us a more predictable, consistent performance from the baseball."

Manfred said during the World Series that he anticipates a new report from scientists on the composition of the baseball by the end of the year. After that, Manfred will decide which measures, if any, to take. Among the options under discussion: Humidors in every park.

The Astros

Baseball is not yet done with the Astros for the team's handling of the Brandon Taubman incident. Or, at least, it shouldn't be.

The Astros were shamed into firing Taubman as assistant GM and retracting their smear of Sports Illustrated's Stephanie Apstein, who broke the story that Taubman yelled a half-dozen times at three female reporters, including one wearing a domestic violence awareness bracelet, "Thank God we got Osuna! I'm so f—— glad we got Osuna!"

Taubman's reference was to Roberto Osuna, whom the Astros acquired in 2018 while he was serving a 75-game suspension for violating baseball's domestic-violence policy. It would be one thing if Taubman were the only Astros official who behaved offensively. But the team's eagerness to believe the explanation he and another team employee provided — and impugn Apstein's integrity with a statement saying her story was an attempted fabrication — indicated that a cultural problem exists within the organization.

Manfred hinted at larger questions during the Series, telling reporters, "I would say that there are a variety of issues. I'm not going to narrow it to the statement or any of those. We're going to continue to review the situation, have conversations with Mr. (Jim) Crane (the Astros' owner). It's one thing to come in and investigate for 24 hours a specific incident. The rest of it is going to take a little more time."

Fair enough, but baseball cannot let the matter pass. The Astros' behavior was reprehensible, and the saga unfolded on the game's biggest stage, distracting from the World Series and embarrassing the sport. A significant fine is warranted, and perhaps more.

*** *The New York Post***

Mookie Betts' future with Red Sox is getting more uncertain

Mark Fischer

J.D. Martinez's decision to stay with the Red Sox could impact the status of superstar outfielder Mookie Betts, whose future is hovering over the club with management trying to cut salary and get under the luxury tax threshold.

Martinez on Monday did not opt out of the final three years and \$62.5 million of his five-year, \$110 million contract with Boston, according to multiple reports, likely because the free-agent market has stalled over the last few offseasons and the need for slugging DHs generally is limited.

The Red Sox currently are projected to exceed the \$208 million luxury tax threshold, and Martinez hitting free agency would have aided the team's efforts to avoid another financial penalty.

So now it seems the Red Sox will have to trade either Martinez, the 32-year-old hitting machine, or Betts, the 27-year-old who won AL MVP in 2018 and is considered one of the best players in baseball.

Betts is under team control for one more year, which will net him \$30 million, and could earn north of \$300 million on the open market.

Betts rejected an eight-year, \$200 million extension following the 2017 season, The Post previously reported, and the potential trade return could do wonders for Boston, which missed the playoffs last season despite winning it all in 2018.

First-year Boston general manager Chaim Bloom didn't offer much when asked about the Betts-Martinez conundrum during his introductory news conference in late October.

"I would say generally, our top priority is going to be sustainability and competitiveness over the long term," Bloom said. "With respect to those two guys, I'm just coming in here and there's a lot that I don't know, and I'm looking forward to building relationships with them and learning a little bit more about them from everybody here."

*** *Associated Press***

Martinez declines to opt out of contract, stays with Red Sox

BOSTON (AP) — Red Sox designated hitter J.D. Martinez has decided to stay in Boston instead of becoming a free agent, declining an option that would have voided the last three years of the contract he signed after teams had reported to spring training in 2018.

The move saves the Red Sox from shopping for a new DH but also complicates their plan to cut salaries and get under baseball's luxury tax threshold. The team's payroll for the tax was a big league-high \$243 million this year and Boston has made it a goal to get under the \$208 million threshold for next season while also signing 2018 AL MVP Mookie Betts to a long-term deal.

Boston signed Martinez after a long negotiation in one of baseball's slowest-moving free agent markets since the collusion scandal of the 1980s. After hitting the fewest homers in the AL in 2017, the year after David Ortiz retired, the team needed a DH. And Martinez was still looking for a job as spring training began.

To seal the \$110 million, five-year deal, the Red Sox gave him the right to opt out after the second or third years if he outperformed it, and by most accounts he did.

Martinez, 32, has averaged just short of 40 homers and 118 RBIs, along with a .317 average and .985 OPS. He was fourth, behind Betts, in the AL MVP voting in 2018, when the Red Sox won a franchise-record 108 games and the World Series.

Now, new Red Sox chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom must try to find a way to sign Betts, who is eligible for arbitration and expected to command a one-year salary near \$30 million, to a deal worthy of a franchise player without busting the team's budget.

MadBum gets qualifying offer, Martinez stays with Red Sox

NEW YORK (AP) — Madison Bumgarner was among 10 free agents who received \$17.8 million qualifying offers from their former teams on Monday, a move that likely will decrease demand for the 30-year-old left-hander.

Bumgarner, the 2014 World Series MVP, went 9-9 with a 3.90 ERA over 34 starts this year after two injury-shortened seasons. San Francisco also made a qualifying offer to left-handed reliever Will Smith.

Six pitchers received the qualifying offers among the 168 free agents, including right-handers Gerrit Cole (Houston), Stephen Strasburg (Washington), Zack Wheeler (New York Mets) and Jake Odorizzi (Minnesota). The others given the offers were third basemen Anthony Rendon (Washington) and Josh Donaldson (Atlanta), first baseman José Abreu (Chicago White Sox) and outfielder Marcell Ozuna (St. Louis).

On the day before free agents can start negotiating contracts with all teams, Red Sox designated hitter J.D. Martinez decided to stay in Boston instead of becoming a free agent, declining an option that would have voided the last three years and \$62.5 million owed as part of the \$110 million, five-year contract he signed after teams had reported to spring training in 2018.

Elvis Andrus is staying with the Rangers after the shortstop passed on a second chance to opt out of his contract, give up \$43 million over the next three years and become a free agent.

Milwaukee cut \$15 million in payroll for next season, trading right-hander Chase Anderson to Toronto for outfield/first base prospect Chad Spanberger and declining a \$7.5 million option on power-hitting first baseman Eric Thames. Anderson was 8-4 with a 4.21 ERA in 27 starts and five relief appearances. Milwaukee had planned to decline his \$8.5 million option, which would have made him eligible for salary arbitration, and Toronto exercised the option following the trade.