

The Boston Red Sox Thursday, November 7, 2019

*** *The Boston Globe***

Red Sox will hold their Winter Weekend in Springfield

Julian McWilliams

SPRINGFIELD — The Red Sox are coming to Springfield.

Red Sox president Sam Kennedy announced Wednesday that the team will hold its annual Winter Weekend at the MGM Springfield and the neighboring MassMutual Center Jan. 17-18.

“We have fans all over New England, and we have lots of fans in the western part of the state,” Kennedy said at a press conference at the MGM Springfield. “It would be ideal for us to bring this event out here.”

The Sox have hosted their Winter Weekend at Foxwoods Resort Casino in Connecticut the last five years. Kennedy and MGM Springfield president Mike Mathis said they hope the switch brings economic growth and development to Springfield and its surrounding areas.

“This is an event that we hope creates lifetime memories for Red Sox fans here in Springfield and for people who will come from all over the region for this great event,” Kennedy said.

The Winter Weekend will include appearances by players and coaches, plus Red Sox alumni and the team mascots.

The Red Sox leadership team will hold a town hall-style event televised by NESN, and there will be round-table discussions, a baseball festival, and displays of the Red Sox’ World Series trophies and various player awards. Tickets are available through the team’s website.

It’s been a week of announcements for the Red Sox. On Monday, All-Star designated hitter J.D. Martinez officially opted into his 2020 \$23.75 million contract.

“Any time you have J.D. Martinez in the middle of your lineup, you’re going to be a better team,” Kennedy said. “I’m glad he’s staying and is going to be a part of the Red Sox we hope for 2020 and beyond.”

Asked if he were surprised that Martinez opted in, Kennedy said he thought it could have gone either way.

“Really, it’s a decision that he and his representatives make based upon what they think of the market,” he said. “It was a hard one to read. We obviously didn’t find out until Monday, but it’s good to have it behind us, because now we have more information as you start to think about the planning for next year and beyond.”

Part of the plan, of course, will surround Mookie Betts. It’s a course that new chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom will have to navigate.

Do they trade the 2018 American League MVP, who will become a free agent at the end of the 2020 season? Or do they let the season play out and hope they can agree to an extension or re-sign him in free agency?

Red Sox officials have said it would be tough to keep both Betts and Martinez as they try to shed payroll, and Kennedy acknowledged that once Martinez decided to stay, the thought of Betts’s future naturally came to mind.

“I’ve said it before and will continue to say it: We love Mookie Betts, and he’s such a special player and person,” Kennedy said. “We’ll continue to have conversations with him. He’s under club control. We’ll see what happens this offseason.”

Betts’s representatives and the Sox haven’t engaged in discussions this offseason, but at the appropriate time, Kennedy said, the sides will connect.

Bloom, though, has the final say in what happens. Kennedy and Bloom haven’t seen much of each other since Bloom’s hiring last week, as the new baseball boss is still getting settled in Boston. But they have been in touch via phone and e-mail.

“He’s done a remarkable job connecting with people in the front office,” Kennedy said. “But also connecting with the players and staff and with our alumni, which I thought is kind of touching. He’s had a number of conversations with Carl Yastrzemski and Jim Rice.”

Kennedy looks forward to the collaboration method Bloom brings to the organization.

“This will be my 19th year,” Kennedy said. “John Henry and Tom Werner [the team owners] have created an environment where they encourage debate and discussion. I think that’s how the best decisions ultimately get made.

“What we’ll see in Chaim’s leadership in the baseball operations department, I do think he’ll be very aggressive in soliciting opinions from his management team.”

*** *The Boston Herald***

The Red Sox’ Rick Porcello dilemma

Jason Mastrodonato

Call it the Rick Porcello dilemma.

The Red Sox could make a small bet on Porcello, a one-year deal low in guarantees but high in incentives to lure the durable right-hander back to Boston.

But there are so many layers to this situation that what the Red Sox choose to do with Porcello could tell us exactly where their offseason is headed.

A free agent for the first time in his career and about to turn 31 years old, Porcello is coming off what was undoubtedly the worst season of his career.

He averaged just 5⅓ innings per start while allowing 31 home runs in 174⅓ innings with a 5.52 ERA and 1.39 WHIP.

What Porcello has always represented is reliability. He averaged more than six innings per start over five years in Boston and only once went on the injured list (for four weeks in 2015 with a strained right triceps).

The Red Sox rotation as currently constructed is anything but reliable.

David Price (elbow, forearm, wrist) has been on the injured list four times in the last four years, averaging just 24 starts per season.

Nathan Eovaldi (elbow, biceps) has been on the injured list every year since 2015, averaging 18 starts per season.

Chris Sale (shoulder, elbow) has been on the injured list three times in three years, averaging 28 starts per season, and is the biggest risk entering 2020 after a visit to Dr. James Andrews resulted in a platelet-rich plasma injection that may or may not fix the problem.

Even if those three Red Sox starters perform to the averages listed above, they'd still miss a combined 29 starts next year.

What that means is that if the Sox are intent on competing (while keeping one eye on rebuilding; let's call it a bridge year), they'd have to find not only a fifth starter to handle a full starter's workload, but also a reserve starter capable of covering 29 missed starts.

This is why the Porcello dilemma could be so telling.

Bringing Porcello back on a small one-year deal makes sense. It gives them a durable innings eater, someone capable of performing much better than he did in 2019. He's a pitcher with below-average velocity but above-average spin rate. His curveball is capable of being a strong out pitch, and when he's spotting his two-seamers and four-seamers, he can pitch at an All-Star level.

There's also the benefit of having a well-known professional work ethic and positive clubhouse presence, two things that aren't accounted for in StatCast data but still very much matter.

If new pitching coach Dave Bush can help Porcello unlock his potential, the Red Sox could ride him into contention for a Wild Card spot or trade him at the deadline and acquire some much-needed prospect capital.

It would be a very Billy-Beane-esque type of signing, with the idea that competing this year may not be realistic, but Porcello could have surplus value on a small one-year contract either way.

Then there's the argument that signing Porcello would be a mistake.

Even if he does take something like a \$6-million base salary loaded with incentives, that's \$6 million that the Sox need to clear elsewhere. They're so strapped up against the \$208-million luxury tax threshold that they don't have but a roll of quarters to spare in their spending this offseason.

And given the Yankees will surely be involved in the top-tier free agents like Gerrit Cole and Stephen Strasburg on their way to beefing up a roster that won 19 more games than the Red Sox in 2019, shouldn't the Sox be looking for hidden gems instead of aging steel?

If the same contract would bring 39-year-old Rich Hill back home to Boston, there's an argument to be made that the higher upside of Hill, despite the injury risks and redundancy in another left-hander, is more valuable to a team trying to close such a wide gap in the division.

Finally, the third option (and probably the most likely option given Chaim Bloom's desire for sustainability) is to avoid veteran free agents altogether and simply get younger.

There are potential trades to be made while unloading players on the big league roster that would bring some young starting pitching to Boston. And if the Sox are truly going to have a bridge year, with the goal in mind to get better for 2021 and beyond, it makes much more sense to find some untested starting pitchers and see what they can do with regular reps in the big leagues.

That's largely why Bloom was brought here from Tampa Bay, where young pitchers grow on trees and the Rays experiment in search of low-cost contributors.

Keep an eye on the Red Sox' efforts in the back-end starting pitching market, and with Porcello specifically. It should be telling about where Bloom wants to take the franchise in the immediate future.

*** *MassLive.com***

Boston Red Sox, Mookie Betts haven't had extension talks yet this winter

Chris Cotillo

SPRINGFIELD -- The Red Sox have not yet engaged in contract talks with Mookie Betts this offseason, team president and CEO Sam Kennedy said Wednesday.

"I'm sure we'll have conversations at the appropriate time," Kennedy said.

That news isn't much of a surprise, as the Sox just hired new chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom less than 10 days ago and have just started their offseason planning. Betts is entering his final year under team control and is scheduled to hit free agency after the season. The Red Sox have made previous offers to the reigning American League MVP but have been rebuffed in their efforts to lock him up to a long-term deal.

Betts' name has been frequently mentioned in trade rumors in recent months due to Boston's goal to cut payroll to get under the \$208 million competitive balance tax threshold in 2020. His future with the Sox became even murkier Monday, when slugger J.D. Martinez opted into his \$23.75 million salary and made Boston's wallet strings even tighter.

Betts is projected to earn \$27.7 million in arbitration, according to MLBTradeRumors, but would likely draw strong interest from contending teams looking to make a splash. At this point, the Red Sox are still hopeful of getting a deal done before having to seriously consider trading the four-time All-Star.

"We love Mookie Betts," Kennedy said. "He's such a special player and such a special person. We'll continue to have conversations with him. He's under club control and we'll see what happens this offseason. We've engaged in discussions with him and his representatives in the past and we'll continue to engage with them. We'll see where it all takes us."

Boston Red Sox Winter Weekend coming to Springfield; annual fan event will be held Jan. 17-18 at MGM Springfield and MassMutual center

Chris Cotillo

SPRINGFIELD -- The Red Sox are officially coming to Springfield in January.

The Sox will host their annual Winter Weekend fan event at MGM Springfield and the MassMutual Center from Jan. 17 to 18, officials said at a press conference Wednesday morning. The two-day festival will include a Town Hall event, autograph sessions and photo opportunities with players, coaches and team alumni as well as panel discussions on a variety of topics.

"This is an event we hope creates lifetime memories for Red Sox fans here in Springfield and for people who will come from all over the region for this great event," said Red Sox president and CEO Sam Kennedy.

The Winter Weekend event, which debuted in 2015, has been held for the last five years at Foxwoods Resort and Casino in Connecticut. Its move to Springfield was precipitated by the Red Sox' new multi-year partnership with MGM as the "official and exclusive resort casino" of the team.

MGM Springfield
Red Sox, MGM reach multi-year partnership

The event had been held at Foxwoods since its inception in 2015.

That partnership, which was announced in March, called for MGM signage throughout Fenway Park and advertisements on the team's TV and radio stations. The new performing arts center being built at Fenway Park will be named the "MGM Music Hall," according to a press release sent Wednesday.

One of the biggest draws of the alliance was the opportunity to bring the Winter Weekend event -- and thousands of visitors -- to western Massachusetts for one weekend.

"To have all these Red Sox stars right here in the city of Springfield; to have literally 8,000-10,000 individuals coming from all across New England, all across the United States and maybe even the world, to come here and be here is a huge event not only for MGM but also the city of Springfield," said mayor Domenic Sarno.

In 2019, more than 20 players -- including reigning Mookie Betts, Chris Sale, Rick Porcello, Andrew Benintendi and Xander Bogaerts -- attended the Winter Weekend event at Foxwoods. Manager Alex Cora and legends Wade Boggs, Dennis Eckersley, Dwight Evans, Carlton Fisk, Fred Lynn, Pedro Martinez, David Ortiz, Jim Rice and Luis Tiant also appeared.

"It's a chance to connect the 2020 team, not only with our great fan base but with each other," Kennedy said. "It'll be the first time that the Red Sox players and coaching staff has a chance to get together and see each other since the end of last year. It's a great way for the players to bond with each other and a great way for our alumni to reconnect with each other and of course, get together with our great fan base."

Kennedy thanked Red Sox fans in western Massachusetts and said he was looking forward to seeing them in January.

"I'd just tell everyone here in the 413 to get ready for Red Sox Nation to make its way here," he said. "It's going to be an event we're really looking forward to and the start of something special for everyone."

*** *RedSox.com***

Evans for HOF? Here are the pros and cons

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- For two decades, Red Sox fans chanted his nickname every time he made one of his signature plays in right field or came up with another clutch hit.

"Dewey, Dewey, Dewey," the roars would go at Fenway.

Now, 29 years after he played his last game for Boston, Red Sox fans are again cheering on Dwight Evans in his quest to be inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Evans, who played for the Sox from 1972-90, is one of 10 people on the Modern Baseball Era ballot that was released on Monday. Candidates must earn 75 percent of the votes from the committee, which consists of 16 members.

While it is often said that a player can't get any better after he retires, Evans is unique in that his offensive strength (getting on base at a high volume) is something that is weighted far more in player evaluations today than when he had his short run on the Baseball Writers' Association of America ballot from 1997-99.

The right-handed hitter played alongside Hall of Famers Carl Yastrzemski, Jim Rice, Carlton Fisk, Dennis Eckersley and Wade Boggs in his career. Evans now has another chance to join his former teammates in Cooperstown.

The case for

- Evans was not only the most productive right fielder of the 1980s, but he was one of the best offensive players of the decade. His 256 homers and 605 extra-base hits were the most of any player from 1980-89. This, for a man who was more known for his defense.

- Yes, that defense. Decades before analytics shaped where players would position themselves, Evans had an innate sense to align himself perfectly. This set him up for the countless tremendous plays he made in his career -- none more memorable than the lunging grab he made to rob Joe Morgan of a game-winning homer in the 11th inning of that epic Game 6 of the 1975 World Series. Evans also possessed a cannon arm, and he still holds the Red Sox's record with eight career Gold Gloves.

- Now, back to the offense. Evans led the American League in OPS twice, walks three times, on-base percentage once and total bases once. In his age-30 through age-37 seasons, he had an impressive line of .280/.385/.496 while averaging 27 homers, 100 runs, 96 RBIs and 96 walks. That type of performance led to Evans finishing in the top five in the AL Most Valuable Player Award voting twice and the top 10 four times.

- Evans is aiming to become the 26th player with the primary position of right field to enter the Hall of Fame. Evans compares, at least on par, with many of them. Al Kaline was a first-ballot Hall of Famer and his career OPS is .855 and his OPS+ is 134, compared to .840 and 127 for Evans. Roberto Clemente, you ask? His career OPS (.834) and OPS+ (130) are slightly below that of Evans. Evans also had much better power than Clemente. While Dave Winfield had better longevity than Evans, leading him in games played, 2,973-2,606, Evans had a better career WAR (67.1-64.2), per Baseball Reference. Evans also edges out Winfield in OPS and had a significantly better on-base percentage (.370-.353).

- If you need a sweetener to put Evans over the top, consider his performance in the two World Series he played in. While the Red Sox lost to the Reds in seven games in 1975 and to the Mets in seven in '86, Evans was a standout performer in both Fall Classics, totaling a .977 OPS while hitting .300 with three homers.

The case against

- Interestingly, Evans wasn't nearly the same offensive player in his 20s as he was in his 30s. From 1972-80, he hit .262 with a .792 OPS. It wasn't until 1981 -- his age-29 season -- when Evans started to emerge as a stud on offense. If Evans does make it into the Hall of Fame, be ready for him to heap praise at Walt Hriniaik, the hitting coach who helped turn his career around beginning late in the '80 season.

- Due to that less-than-spectacular first half of his career, Evans lacks some of the round numbers that many Hall of Famers have. He would have needed to play another few seasons to reach 3,000 hits, finishing at 2,446. Evans had 385 homers, which doesn't stand out in the corner outfield like it would at some other positions.

- Surprisingly, Evans was an All-Star just three times in his career, and only twice in his decade of dominance in the 1980s. By comparison, Kaline was an 18-time All-Star, while Clemente and Winfield each made it 12 times. You wonder how many more All-Star Games Evans would have played in if OBP and OPS were as valued as they are today, and if defense had the metrics of this era.

*** *NBC Sports Boston***

How J.D. Martinez could turn a 3-team no-trade clause into a virtual guarantee he stays with Red Sox

John Tomase

If J.D. Martinez wants to avoid being traded this offseason, he can strategically deploy a little-noticed provision in his contract to shift the odds significantly in his favor.

Martinez holds a limited no-trade clause that on its surface wouldn't seem to provide much protection. He can designate three teams at the start of each offseason, and those teams can change from year to year. He must inform the Red Sox by the end of this month.

A three-team no-trade list may not sound like much, but given the depressed market that helped Martinez decide not to opt out of his contract in the first place, he could effectively eliminate the field by designating the most likely suitors for his services. And with the Red Sox trying to figure out how to cut payroll to drop below \$208 million for luxury-tax reasons, they could be tempted to move Martinez and the \$23.75 million he's due in 2020.

Should Sox follow this model for a Betts trade?

A traditional no-trade might block the Yankees, Dodgers, and say, the Mets, big-market clubs with the means to absorb Martinez's salary. Players like San Francisco's Madison Bumgarner have notably included high-payroll clubs on their no-trade lists not necessarily because they don't want to be traded to one, but because they want the leverage to demand additional concessions if a deal is struck.

But what if Martinez were to focus his no-trade on three teams most likely to desire his services and block the White Sox, Rangers, and maybe Blue Jays? All three have money to spend and potential openings at DH. All three could make a case for Martinez either putting them in contention or playing a vital role in the development of young players. And all three were presumed candidates to sign him had Martinez entered free agency.

We've already laid out the case against most of baseball pursuing Martinez. He's a bad fit in the National League, because he's no longer a full-time outfielder. Most of the AL either already has a DH (Shohei Ohtani in Anaheim, Nelson Cruz in Minnesota, Yordan Alvarez in Houston, etc. . . .) or can't afford one due \$62.5 million over the next three years (Tampa, Cleveland, Kansas City, etc. . . .)

Of the handful of teams left, it's hard to imagine the Red Sox dealing with the Yankees. About the only calculus Martinez would have to perform is whether the Mariners should replace the Jays on his list, which he might want to consider, since T-Mobile, the park formerly known as Safeco, remains a graveyard.

In any event, he could virtually guarantee that any decision to leave Boston would be his. While we don't know what teams he listed in the first two years of his Red Sox deal -- it hardly seemed relevant, given their contending status -- his choices this time around could greatly increase the likelihood that he's not going anywhere.

*** *The Athletic***

The Hall of Fame case for Dwight Evans

Peter Gammons

July 3, 1980. It was 101 degrees in Baltimore, humid enough to boil crabs in the dugout. I had arrived at Memorial Stadium at 12:30 p.m., to run and shag and hopefully play pepper or whatever players were doing on a sauna-day afternoon. Red Sox hitting coach Walt Hriniaik said, "I don't think anyone's coming out until BP (at 5 p.m.), except Dwight. Could you hold up shagging for a while?"

Of course. Hriniaik pulled the cart with the baseballs out to the mound. Carl Yastrzemski came out in shorts and a t-shirt and leaned against the cage. Dwight Evans walked out of the visitors dugout, stopping for words with Yastrzemski, his close friend.

These were hard times for Evans. Once considered one of the sport's rising stars, he was nearing the All-Star Break with a .192/.282/.345 slash line, platooning with Tom Poquette, with media speculation that he could be traded to whoever would give the Red Sox a mid-rotation starter.

The concern was that he seemed to bail on hard-throwing right-handers, or pitchers with late-breaking curveballs and sliders. “Afraid” was whispered or written, spoken in the press box and in the scouts’ section.

Evans was 28 when he reached this crossroads, a quiet, complex person who was devoted to his son, born with a genetic disorder, who he and his wife Susan raised with fierce dignity and privacy. What was left somewhere in the back rooms of many people’s memories was the fact that in 1973 and 1978 Evans suffered severe beanings while facing Mike Paul of the Rangers and Mike Parrott of the Mariners.

“In those days, they didn’t have the concussion awareness we have today,” says Evans. “No one really knew what I was going through.”

In the famed 1978 race where the Red Sox lost a 14-game lead, after Evans returned to the lineup, in September he uncharacteristically missed two fly balls in a loss at that same Memorial Stadium. After the game, I asked him if he was still having headache or vision issues from the beaming. “I don’t know why you’re going there,” he responded, clearly annoyed by my question. He denied. That’s just the way it was back then.

A year and a half later, he got into the batting cage to hit off Hriniak, his trusted mentor, with the advice of his friend, Yastrzemski, whom he knew genuinely cared about him, and, as we learned years later, clearly understood the Camus nightmare Evans was living.

It seemed as if the session lasted for an hour. Evans hit only a dozen or so balls hard into the outfield. He hit ground balls and soft contact balls, and when Hriniak signaled the session was over, the job was to gather up the balls that had been thrown back into the infield and put them in the cart.

“I hate watching Dwight go through this,” I said.

“There’s progress,” Hriniak replied. “I think he’s headed in the right direction.”

Coach talk.

Yastrzemski walked out from behind the cage. “You’ll remember this day the rest of your life,” he said. “Today, he got his career back on track. He found balance. That’s what he was working on for an hour. Balance. He’s got it. It’ll take a few games for him to get his confidence back to where it was when he came up. A few games, and he’ll realize balance means he doesn’t have to worry about getting hit.”

It did take a few days. But after the All-Star break, the following week, when the Red Sox got back to Fenway, Evans got four hits. Before the break, his OPS was .613. After, it was 1.001. The next season, which was carved by the first major strike in baseball history, he tied for the American League home run title.

Consider these facts:

During the 1980s, Evans led all major leaguers in extra-base hits and ranked second to Rickey Henderson in times on base, with 2,447. For the decade, he ranked second in Weighted Runs Above Average to Wade Boggs, HOF. He led the league in Weighted Runs Created. He led the American League in homers (256) and was second in RBI (900), total bases (2,657), and walks (919). Eddie Murray had more RBI, Robin Yount had more total bases, Rickey Henderson reached base more often, all en route to Cooperstown.

He was the only player in the ’80s with 900 RBI and 900 walks; that hadn’t been accomplished in a decade since the 1930s. He won five Gold Gloves in those years, eight for his career.

For his career, he reached base 3890 times, 25th in history among righthanded batters — at the time he retired, he was 11th on the list. Career extra-base hits? Thirteenth when he retired, and still twenty-ninth,

above Joe DiMaggio. When he left the game, he ranked in the top 25 outfielders in walks, homers, times on base, doubles and RBIs.

For the span of his career, from 1972-1991, he was first in the AL in walks, second in homers, third in RBI, second in runs scored, third in doubles.

He played in two World Series for Boston, in which he hit .300/.397/.580/.977, with 15 hits and 14 RBIs in 14 games.

In this current analytic era, the on-base and power numbers would have made him a hero. Evans developed a remarkable ability to go to the plate and think zone, looking until two strikes for a particular pitch in a particular area. Ralph Houk called him “the best 3-0 hitter I’ve ever seen, because he only swings when he gets the right pitch in the right area.” I remember a grand slam off Oakland pitcher Tom Underwood that won a game on a 3-0 pitch that resembled the sun coming up over Campobello Island.

These are the offensive data points, but, at least in part because of the concussions, he spent almost the entire first half of his career as a defensive offensive player and an offensive defensive player. He wasn’t just a good outfielder, he was great, playing in a Fenway Park right field that might have been the toughest in the sport.

I remember his style when shagging balls in the outfield. On every ball off the bat, he busted to get to position, catch the ball as if he were in the middle of a pitching windup and get rid of the ball with velocity and carry, without taking a walk-up step. He was a master of getting to the foul line, planting his back foot and firing to second base as if he were an infielder.

When I worked with the great Joe Morgan, we used to debate Evans’ catch on Morgan in 1975 World Series Game 6, an 11th-inning rocket directly over Evans’ head; it saved the tie, and Evans turned it into a double play. From right field, he couldn’t see the catcher’s sign, the setup location, the swing path that helps a center fielder. Years later, Morgan admitted to me that his ’75 Reds teammates told him they thought it was the best ever. Of course, the next night Morgan’s hit won the series.

Dwight Evans won eight gold gloves; Ichiro Suzuki and Roberto Clemente won more as right fielders, while three of Al Kaline’s ten gold gloves were won as a center fielder.

Look, I agree with FanGraphs’ Jay Jaffe. Lou Whitaker belongs in the Hall; he and Evans have the highest career WAR numbers and JAWS numbers of the players on this year’s Veteran’s ERA ballots. I voted for Ted Simmons the one time he was on the ballot, never imagining he wasn’t a first-ballot HOFer. And Dale Murphy and Don Mattingly were great players — Mattingly’s career cut short because of a back issue — who left the game far better than they found it.

If the cutting-edge Boston University CTE Center had existed when Evans was first hit in the head in 1973, Evans might have already been in the Hall of Fame for more than 20 years. But it didn’t, and the man who became a New England icon called “Dewey” spent nearly half his career struggling. And overcame it.

Yaz was right. That July 3, 1980 afternoon I was hot, sweaty, exhausted and feeling blinded by the light, but forty years later I still remember what he told me: Balance, and the day that Dwight Evans turned the corner towards the New York Thruway and the road to Cooperstown.

2 Red Sox right fielders, 2 eras, 2 examples of how much baseball has changed

Steve Buckley

Two of the best players ever to patrol right field for the Red Sox are in the news this week, and in ways that offer startling examples of how much baseball has changed in recent years.

One of these players is Dwight Evans, who won eight Gold Gloves during his years with the Red Sox and socked 385 home runs yet made only three appearances on the Hall of Fame ballot that gets sent to voting members of the Baseball Writers' Association of America. He fell below 5 percent on his third try, necessitating that his name be removed from future consideration by the ball writers. Now Evans is getting another shot at Cooperstown, as he is among 10 former players on the Hall's Modern Baseball Era ballot.

The other Red Sox right fielder in the news is the incumbent, Mookie Betts, who on Sunday earned his fourth Gold Glove. But the bigger news on the Betts front is the nonstop speculation that the Sox might trade their 2018 Most Valuable Player as a means to get under the \$208 million luxury-tax threshold. Betts will also be a free agent after next season, and he's going to come out of the experience a very wealthy man.

How do these two stellar Boston right fielders, one of them from the present time, the other from the days of Kevin White, "Cheers" and the Big Three, illustrate the startling examples of how much baseball has changed over the years? Read on.

With Betts, what's startling is the lack of fan uproar over a possible trade. And, no, you're not being lured into a handwringing session about how nobody cares anymore, baseball is dead, etc. I don't believe that at all. I believe Red Sox fans do care about Betts but, like most 21st century baseball fans, they're better equipped to discuss salary thresholds, impending free-agency and other gadgets from the general manager's playbook.

To help make the point, allow me to pose a question: What do Carlton Fisk, Luis Tiant, Fred Lynn and Mo Vaughn have in common?

Answer: They were all beloved members of the Red Sox who were either traded or left town via free agency, after which enraged fans stormed the gates of Fenway Park with torches and pitchforks, like in the old Frankenstein movies.

OK, so it didn't quite happen that way. What did happen was fans got really, really upset. But we've been seeing subtle changes over the past 15 years as to the manner in which fans react when a favorite player is either traded or skips town via free agency. Nomar Garciaparra was one of the most popular players in Red Sox history during his early years — a generation of Little Leaguers grew up tugging at their batting gloves in honor of Nomahh — but there was not a lot of uproar when the shortstop was traded to the Cubs at the '04 trade deadline.

That the Red Sox went on to win their first World Series in 86 years made it easier for fans to make their peace with the trade. But I suspect the customers agreed with manager Terry Francona's assessment that poor Garciaparra "was Bostoned out."

It wasn't too long after the Red Sox won the World Series that Pedro Martinez, even more popular than Garciaparra, signed a four-year deal with the Mets. Fans were bummed but not ballistic, perhaps seeing the reasoning behind not going four years on Pedro.

And now, 15 years later, fans have access to so much information that they can "play" general manager. They can take their fantasy leagues and apply them to real-life situations but with absolutely no consequences. The new kid in charge of baseball ops at Fenway, Chaim Bloom, will get roasted if he trades Mookie for what turns out to be a bad return. But at least fans will have a better idea why Betts was traded, even if they don't agree with it.

It occurs to me that this is something we sportswriters are missing. Or that I've been missing, anyway. There's been plenty of preemptive outrage from the punditry, but the citizens of Red Sox Nation — that is, the people who purchase the tickets — are dealing with it. Stay tuned, however, if Betts gets traded for a bag of balls. There are, after all, limits to how much a Sox fan is willing to take.

And now let's get to Evans. What we have here is a case of modern-day statistics being used to boost the candidacy of a player whose career ended before much of the new math was even being used in the baseball ops department. I remember reading back in the day that among the reasons Evans' Hall of Fame candidacy sputtered was because he was only a .272 hitter and was named to the All-Star team just three times.

But 21st century numbers-crunchers view the All-Star Game as an arbitrary thing that doesn't necessarily shine a light on a player's Hall of Fame worthiness. What they do believe in is WAR, and guess what: Evans' WAR was 67.1, which ties him with Roberto Alomar and Don Drysdale, both Hall of Famers, for 161st in history. Harold Baines, elected to the Hall of Fame last year by the Today's Game Era Committee, had a career WAR of just 38.7.

Evans also had a better WAR than Hall of Famers Dave Winfield, Duke Snider and Billy Williams, among others.

I spoke with Evans during spring training about Baines getting in, and he couldn't have been more gracious. But he made a valid point when he said: "When I was on the ballot, guys were starting to hit 60 home runs. And then it went to 70. And I got caught up in that awkward stage of the game changing."

These days, it's the way we break down the numbers that's changing, and that might bode well for Evans' Hall of Fame chances.

Do I think Evans is getting in? Not sure. What I do know is his candidacy will be viewed through a lens that didn't exist 25 years ago.

Disclosure: I wasn't a Hall of Fame voter when Evans was on the BBWAA ballot. Would I have voted for him if I had a ballot back then? No. Would I vote for him now? Yes, I would.

And I wouldn't trade Betts, either. But that's just me.