

## ***The Boston Red Sox Friday, November 8, 2019***

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

#### **Red Sox Mookie Betts, Xander Bogaerts win Silver Slugger awards**

Peter Abraham

Mookie Betts added to his growing collection of awards on Thursday when he was named the Silver Slugger for right field in the American League.

Red Sox teammate Xander Bogaerts was the choice at shortstop.

Betts had a .951 OPS over 150 games with 74 extra-base hits, 80 RBIs and 135 runs.

Betts was the only American League player to win a Gold Glove and Silver Slugger this season. Cody Bellinger, Zack Greinke and J.T. Realmuto did it in the National League.

Betts, 27, has accomplished that double three times in five full seasons in the majors. No other Sox player in history has done that more than once.

Bogaerts has three Silver Sluggers, winning previously in 2015 and '16. Prior to Bogaerts, the only Red Sox shortstops to win the award were John Valentin (1995) and Nomar Garciaparra (1997).

The 27-year-old Bogaerts had a .939 OPS with 52 doubles, 33 home runs, 117 RBIs and 110 runs. It was his best season at the plate and came after he agreed to a six-year, \$120 million extension.

#### **What Chaim Bloom's track record tells us about how the Red Sox will use trades**

Alex Speier

Let the deals begin.

It remains to be seen whether the Red Sox trade Mookie Betts this winter to stay in front of his potential (likely) foray into free agency after the 2020 season. But in an offseason of potentially seismic change, it seems safe to suggest that under new chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom, the Red Sox are about to start using trades as a roster-building strategy with far more frequency than in recent years.

Over three years under Bloom (as senior vice president of baseball operations) and general manager Erik Neander, the Rays were aggressive in using trades to reshape their organization in a fashion that dramatically distinguished them from the Red Sox.

The Rays' deal-making took several forms.

They didn't shy away from dealing face-of-the-franchise talents. Before the 2018 season, the Rays sent Evan Longoria to the Giants, a deal whose greatest significance to date has been the significant savings that were applied elsewhere (hello, Charlie Morton) at a time when Longoria's production has been in decline.

More dramatically, at the 2018 trade deadline, Tampa Bay shipped Chris Archer to the Pirates for Austin Meadows (a 2019 All-Star), a potential ace in Tyler Glasnow, and top-100 pitching prospect Shane Baz. On the same day they dealt Archer, the Rays acquired outfielder Tommy Pham from the Cardinals, adding a multidimensional force at his low-point value.

The Red Sox took note.

“We observed within the division but from afar the creativity with which the Rays front office and specifically Chaim approached the trade market,” noted Red Sox CEO/president Sam Kennedy. “Obviously the Pittsburgh deal was one that we discussed [when interviewing Bloom] — how that came about, the thought process behind it.

“But he was quick to acknowledge that there’s been some good trades and some bad trades. He lamented, not a trade, but DJ LeMahieu as one that got away.

“The intellectual honesty and humility with which he approached the interview process was striking. And the creative thinking that we think he’ll bring to the table was an attractive quality.”

Bloom and the Rays identified talents on the ascent — and, in Longoria and Archer, shed players whose performance peaks perhaps had already passed. Yet those moves illustrate only part of the trade strategy employed by the Rays.

Neander and Bloom were elevated as the heads of Tampa Bay’s baseball operations department at the start of November 2016. According to data compiled from MLBTradeRumors.com and Baseball-Reference.com, the Rays made 65 deals over the next three years, with:

- 44 trades involving players, draft picks, and/or international bonus pool money both coming to and leaving Tampa Bay;
- 15 players acquired for cash considerations;
- six deals in which Tampa Bay parted with a player for cash considerations.

The trade market was a frequent avenue for bullpen upgrades, whether it was adding Sergio Romo and Chaz Roe for cash considerations while swapping a swingman (Erasmus Ramirez) for a wipeout late-innings option (Steve Cishek) in a matter of days in July 2017, or dealing an opener (Ryne Stanek) as part of a trade for a reliever with soon-to-be-realized dominant potential (Nick Anderson) at this year’s deadline.

The frequency of deal-making suggested an organization looking not just to fill holes but to upgrade across the roster. Tampa Bay’s ability to compete owed in no small part to the quality of its depth, something cultivated by the constant efforts to seek upgrades.

“[Bloom] worked under [Andrew Friedman] for a lot of years, and from what I understand had done quite a bit of work on roster construction in the background,” Longoria said in September. “Now, being more at the forefront, obviously he’s done a really nice job putting together a team and being able to find the pieces to make them successful with the constraints that they’re always under.

“They’ve done what always made us successful there, which was add pieces — value pieces — that ended up being huge contributors.”

There also were whiffs. The Rays dealt Jake Odorizzi to the Twins before the 2018 season, when his value was relatively low, in exchange for infield prospect Jermaine Palacios. Odorizzi anchored the AL Central-winning Twins rotation this past year, while Palacios has seen his value crater. The Rays dealt outfielder Corey Dickerson — coming off an All-Star season in 2017 — for nothing of impact in return; Dickerson has continued to excel offensively the last two years.

Christopher L. Gasper: Will the Red Sox truly let Chaim Bloom do the job?

Both moves can be viewed as the sort of cost-cutting forced by Tampa Bay’s operating constraints, but also offer a reminder that payroll purges come with risk. Even so, the larger portrait of the Rays’ trades while

Bloom worked alongside Neander is one of upgrades both to the core and at the margins despite severe payroll constraints.

During the same period, the Red Sox took a very different approach to the trade market. They made a blockbuster deal in December 2016 — the Chris Sale acquisition from the White Sox — and also addressed midyear needs at the trade deadline. But outside of those typical peak periods of trade activity, they were reserved in their deal-making under former president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski.

During the same time frame in which Neander and Bloom made 65 trades in Tampa Bay, the Red Sox made 21 deals — 16 involving players or international bonus-pool money moving in both directions, two in which they acquired players for cash considerations, and three in which they traded away players for cash considerations.

Under Bloom, that pace is almost certain to increase in Boston, regardless of whether the Red Sox keep or trade Betts this winter. With the GM Meetings looming next week, it may not be long before Bloom has a chance to start reimagining and reshaping the Red Sox' talent pool using different avenues than the organization has traveled in recent years.

### **Hint of collusion has baseball union on the defensive**

Michael Silverman

In another sign of a brewing labor battle in baseball, the players' union sent out a warning flare this week that it is not going to wait for another deep freeze to set in on the free agent market before speaking out.

The MLB Players Association announced Wednesday that it has opened an investigation into comments made by Atlanta general manager Alex Anthopoulos on a conference call Monday about how the Braves had contacted 27 other teams recently and “had a chance to get a sense of what the other clubs are going to look to do in free agency, who might be available in trades.”

GMs speak among themselves all the time, but when teams share information in order to act in concert when it comes to signing or not signing free agents, that's when talk enters collusion territory. And as owners learned in the 1980s — when they lost three collusion cases — and in more recent settlements as well, teaming up with each other to control the market is a no-no.

And with the last couple of offseasons seeing a considerable cool-down in the free agent market, players union executive director Tony Clark did not take Anthopoulos's quote as innocent, business-as-usual stuff.

“The statements made by Braves GM Alex Anthopoulos call into the question the integrity of the entire free-agent system,” said Clark's statement. “The clear description of Club coordination is egregious, and we have launched an immediate investigation looking into the matter.”

A few hours later, the Braves tweeted out a statement from Anthopoulos in which he apologized for any “confusion” that could suggest there was collusion.

“In advance of the General Managers meetings, I called around to Clubs to explore the possibility of potential off-season trades,” Anthopoulos was quoted as saying. “At no time during any of these calls was there discussion of individual free agents or the Braves' intentions with respect to the free agent market. To the extent I indicated otherwise during my media availability Wednesday, I misspoke and apologize for any confusion.”

MLB did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

The current collective bargaining agreement between the players and owners expires after the 2021 season. Last spring, the sides agreed to re-engage in substantive economic negotiations.

### Running up numbers

The Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge campaign announced it had exceeded \$100 million raised for cancer research since the effort began in 1990. The campaign involves Boston Marathon runners raising money. In the first year, \$100,000 was raised; last year, \$6.6 million was raised. The single-year high was in 2014, the year after the Marathon bombings, when \$8.3 million was raised . . . Former slugger David Ortiz presented a check of \$500,000 on behalf of the Red Sox Foundation and Live Nation to the Boston Arts Academy. The academy's foundation is trying to raise \$30 million over the next five years in its "Building Our Future" campaign.

### Shopping in NY

According to the New York Post, the Silver Lake investment firm is attempting to buy "major stakes" in both the New York Knicks and New York Rangers. Glenn Hutchins, a part-owner of the Celtics, is the retired co-founder of the Silver Lake firm . . . New Balance's appeal of the London High Court's decision that the shoe and apparel company had not matched a bid by Nike to become the uniform supplier of the Liverpool Football Club was dismissed, according to the Liverpool Echo . . . Ballots were still being counted Thursday, but voters in Colorado likely approved by a narrow margin a ballot proposal for sports betting in the state to begin next May. Annual state tax revenue estimates are at \$29 million, with the money earmarked for water conservation projects.

### You make the call

In a poll out of Seton Hall's Stillman School of Business, fans gave their highest approval rating for officiating in major sports to baseball. Sixty-four percent of respondents rated major league umpiring as "good," with only 3 percent thinking it's "terrible."

For the NBA, it was 49 percent good, 13 percent terrible; the NFL was at 48 percent good, 27 percent terrible; the NHL at 44 percent good, 6 percent terrible; college basketball at 48 percent good, 9 percent terrible; and college football at 53 percent good, 12 percent terrible.

Two side notes to the poll: 62 percent of respondents believe reactions to officiating in the NFL are influenced by sports betting. And perhaps encouragingly, the split between Democrats and Republicans on these opinions was minimal, varying mostly by only 2 or 3 percentage points.

### **Tickets for Red Sox spring training games go on sale Dec. 7**

Nate Weitzer

Tickets for Red Sox spring training games will go on sale Dec. 7 at 10 a.m. at JetBlue Park in Fort Myers, Fla., and online at [redsox.com](http://redsox.com).

The Red Sox will play 18 exhibition games at JetBlue Park — 17 Grapefruit League contests and one against Northeastern — beginning Feb. 21, 2020.

Pitchers and catchers are scheduled to hold their first workouts Feb. 12 and position players follow Feb. 17. Workouts are free and open to the public.

[Click here](#) for the complete 2020 spring training schedule.

The Red Sox equipment truck will leave Fenway Park for Florida on Monday, Feb. 3.

**\* *MassLive.com***

**Why the Boston Red Sox will be much busier making moves under Chaim Bloom**

Chris Cotillo

Remember last winter, when the Red Sox went months at a time without making a single move?

Don't count on a repeat performance.

While former president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski tended to make only a few transactions every winter, the Rays -- led by Erik Neander and new Red Sox chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom -- were always one of the busiest teams in baseball. The wheeling and dealing never stopped for Tampa Bay, with trades and signings being made from early November to late March.

The numbers speak for themselves. Since Neander and Bloom took over the Rays in Nov. 2016, they've had much busier offseasons than the Red Sox in every transactional category.

Counting total trades, free agent signings, minor league signings (with spring training invites), waiver claims and transactions, the Rays made 69 transactions in the last three winters. The Red Sox made just 35.

Tampa Bay made a staggering 22 trades in those three periods while Boston made just five. The Rays focused on making many more depth additions, signing 33 non-roster free agents in contrast to the Sox signing 19.

The moves Bloom and Neander made ranged from small waiver claims to major trades (like Evan Longoria to the Giants, Jake Odorizzi to the Twins and others). It's clear the duo was constantly focused on churning the Rays' roster, looking for creative ways to do so and viewing the normal offseason calendar as nothing more than a suggestion that other teams might follow.

In his 10 days running the Red Sox, Bloom as already made the same number of external additions to the 40-man roster (one) as Dombrowski did last winter. The Sox claimed lefty Josh Osich off waivers from the White Sox last week; the only player brought in from outside the organization that was on the 40-man roster by Opening Day was reliever Colten Brewer.

With the Rays, Bloom and Neander showed a willingness to act very early, swinging a series of significant mid-November deals. In 2016, Tampa Bay sent Taylor Motter and Richie Shaffer to the Mariners for a three-player package headlined by righty Andrew Kittredge. A year later, they sent closer Brad Boxberger to the Diamondbacks for a pitching prospect. Just last year, the Rays kicked off trading season by acquiring catcher Mike Zunino from Seattle in a rare trade at the GM Meetings.

Bloom won't wait to upgrade the Sox' roster, and he'll likely never rest in his attempts to keep tweaking things. So stay tuned, Sox fans. The wheels could start turning any minute.

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Bloom impresses Kennedy by contacting Sox alumni

When Red Sox president and CEO Sam Kennedy hired Bloom to run his baseball operations department, he knew Bloom would likely spend his first couple weeks getting familiar with people in the organization. Kennedy figured he'd make calls to his players and coaches while working to build relationships with people in the front office. He figured there'd be constant communication between Bloom and other team decision-makers like manager Alex Cora. But the lengths Bloom has gone to in his effort to orient himself with the Red Sox have surprised Kennedy in the first 10 days.

Bloom has made an effort to call and introduce himself to Sox legends like Carl Yastrzemski and Jim Rice, Kennedy said Wednesday, in an effort to gain a greater understanding of the team's history. To Kennedy, that effort has been an early indication that he made the right hire.

"They can give him a sense of the history and what it means to be a member of the Red Sox," Kennedy said. "I thought that showed some incredible feel on his part, to want to connect with our alums who know what it's like to be in Boston."

Since wrapping up meetings in Boston early last week, Bloom has been in Florida with his family, putting the finishing touches on their move to Massachusetts. Before returning to Boston on Wednesday, he spent much of the week in constant communication with Kennedy and others, familiarizing himself with the organization while forming an offseason plan.

While Bloom hopes to foster a collaborative culture in his first go-around running a front office, the Sox want to make it clear that he has ultimate decision-making power.

"I think what we'll see with Chaim's leadership, with the baseball ops department, clearly he's in charge," Kennedy said. "He's the decision-maker. The buck stops with him. I do think he'll be very aggressive in soliciting opinions from his team, his management team. He's demonstrated that type of culture and fit worked really well for him in Tampa. We expect to see that. Things will play out as we go forward."

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10 observations from the last week in baseball

1. J.D. Martinez acted all season like he'd let agent Scott Boras make his opt-out decision. How Boras advised him on it speaks to the overall state of the free agent market.
2. Carlos Beltran becomes about the ninth good friend of Alex Cora to become a big-league manager. Great hire by the Mets, and I'm sure we'll hear a lot of Mets references in Cora's press conferences this year.
3. How the Pirates possibly fired their GM in the middle of a managerial search is beyond comprehension. They may now be the most dysfunctional organization in the league. (Sorry Mets and Marlins).
4. I'd take a flier on Dellin Betances this year if I was in charge of a team with a bullpen need. Coming off a lost season, he can likely be had for an incentive-laden deal. No risk, high reward.
5. Good to see Dana LeVangie getting interest in coaching gigs elsewhere. After not getting the bullpen coach job in Chicago, he'll probably remain with the Sox in a pro scouting capacity.
6. The Alex Anthopoulos investigation is ridiculous, but it speaks to the tensions between the league and the MLBPA entering the winter.
7. If Ben Cherington is hired to run the Pirates, he might look to bring Red Sox assistant GM Eddie Romero with him in some capacity. Romero is likely the Sox official who interviewed elsewhere for a job, though that's unconfirmed.
8. There are some guys who seem like they'll never leave the teams they play for. Adam Wainwright and Brett Gardner feel like two of those.
9. Ah, it's that time of year where the Yankees are linked to every top free agent. Fun!
10. The GM Meetings start Monday. So it begins.

**Boston Red Sox rumors: Jackie Bradley Jr. trade 'seems all but certain,' Justin Smoak a free agent option at first base (report)**

Christopher Smith

The Boston Red Sox trading center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr. this offseason seems almost certain, The Athletic's Ken Rosenthal wrote.

Rosenthal also suggested the Red Sox could pursue Justin Smoak to play first base.

Rosenthal wrote, “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.”

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

The Red Sox are trying to cut their payroll under the \$208 million Competitive Balance Tax threshold. The 2020 payroll as of now is an estimated \$222.22 million.

MassLive.com also mentioned Smoak, who turns 33 on Dec. 5, as a free agent option at first base for the Red Sox. Most of the switch-hitter’s power production comes from the left side of the plate vs. righties. So he’s potentially someone who could platoon with Sam Travis, Michael Chavis or Bobby Dalbec.

### **Boston Red Sox’s Xander Bogaerts, Mookie Betts receive 2019 AL Silver Slugger awards**

Christopher Smith

Boston Red Sox stars Xander Bogaerts and Mookie Betts were awarded 2019 Silver Sluggers.

Both are three-time winners. Bogaerts also earned the award in 2015 and ’16. Betts won in 2016 and ’18.

They became the fourth and fifth Red Sox players to win at least three times, joining seven-time winner David Ortiz and six-time winners Wade Boggs and Manny Ramirez.

Bogaerts batted .309 with a .384 on-base percentage, .555 slugging percentage, .939 OPS, 33 homers, 52 doubles, 117 RBIs, 190 hits and 110 runs in 155 games (698 plate appearances).

Betts hit .295 with a .391 on-base percentage, .524 slugging percentage, .915 OPS, 29 homers, 40 doubles, five triples, 176 hits, 135 runs and 80 RBIs in 150 games (706 plate appearances).

### **Boston Red Sox pitchers and catchers will report Feb. 12; Truck Day is Feb. 3 at Fenway Park**

Chris Cotillo

Red Sox pitchers and catchers will report to Fort Myers on Feb. 12, the team announced Thursday. The club’s first full squad workout at the Fenway South complex is scheduled for Feb. 17.

The annual Truck Day -- when the equipment truck leaves from Fenway Park for Fort Myers -- is scheduled for Feb. 3, the day after the Super Bowl. Sox players will likely start arriving in Fort Myers that week.

The Red Sox will return to JetBlue Park at Fenway South for the ninth straight season, playing 18 home spring training games before the regular season begins March 26 in Toronto. The spring opener is Feb. 21 at 1:05 p.m. against Northeastern with the Grapefruit League opener scheduled for Feb. 22 at 1:05 p.m. against the Rays.

Highlights of the spring schedule include matchups with the Yankees on Feb. 29 (home) and March 3 (away) and a 6:05 p.m. start against the Orioles at JetBlue Park on Feb. 21. Spring training tickets will go on sale Dec. 7 at 10 a.m.

### **Billy Joel to return to Fenway Park for 7th consecutive summer**

Ray Kelly

Billy Joel will return to Fenway Park in August for his seventh annual performance at the historic Boston ballpark.

Earlier this year, Joel pledged to continue to play Fenway Park annually with the announcement of his induction into the newly created Fenway Park Music Hall of Fame.

Joel, 70, announced on his website Friday that he will play Fenway Park on Aug. 28, 2020.

His six previous shows there have all been sellouts, and he has been given a World Series ring by the Red Sox.

Get the cheapest concert tickets by shopping around here: StubHub, SeatGeek, Ticketmaster

Joel has received both The Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song, Kennedy Center Honors and the once-in-a-century ASCAP Centennial Award.

He is also the recipient of six Grammy Awards, including the prestigious Grammy Legend Award.

Joel has been inducted into both the Songwriter's Hall of Fame and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and has received numerous industry awards, including a Tony Award for "Movin' Out," a Broadway musical based on his music.

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

### **These are your 2019 Silver Slugger winners**

Manny Randhawa

The American League and National League Silver Slugger Awards were announced Thursday, and eight hitters were bestowed with the honor for the first time in their careers, underscoring the incredible young talent in the game today. On the other end of the spectrum, Mike Trout won for the seventh time in nine seasons, and the Red Sox had a pair of third-time winners.

There were also runs that came to an end, including at third base in the NL, where the winner was someone other than Nolan Arenado for the first time since 2014.

The Braves had the most winners of any club, with three, unless you count the Astros, who had two AL winners plus a pitcher who won the NL honor (we'll explain below).

Here's a full list of the 2019 Silver Slugger Award winners:

#### **CATCHER**

AL winner: Mitch Garver, Twins (first)

Garver had a tremendous breakout season with a .995 OPS (156 OPS+) and 31 home runs in just 311 at-bats for the Twins. Entering the 2019 campaign, Garver had seven homers in 348 career at-bats between '17 and '18. With Jason Castro on the free-agent market, Minnesota can breathe easier knowing Garver -- who also improved defensively -- is its catcher for the foreseeable future.

NL winner: J.T. Realmuto, Phillies (second)

Make it two straight Silver Slugger Awards for Realmuto, who adds to his trophy shelf after winning an NL Gold Glove Award earlier in the week. The 28-year-old backstop, considered the best all-around catcher in the game, slashed .275/.328/.493 with 25 home runs in 593 plate appearances in his first season with Philadelphia.

#### FIRST BASE

AL winner: Carlos Santana, Indians (first)

Santana is only getting better with age. The 33-year-old slugger hit .281/.397/.515 for a career-best .911 OPS with a career-high-tying 34 homers in his return to Cleveland after a one-year stint in Philadelphia. Playing at an offense-heavy position, it's not a surprise that this is Santana's first Silver Slugger Award.

NL winner: Freddie Freeman, Braves (first)

Freeman didn't have a Silver Slugger Award going into the 2019 season. Hard to believe, isn't it? He has one now, though, after hitting .295/.389/.549 with a career-best 38 home runs for Atlanta. He adds his first Silver Slugger Award to the Wilson Defensive Player of the Year Award he won Wednesday.

#### SECOND BASE

AL winner: DJ LeMahieu, Yankees (first)

He had a batting title on his resume heading into his first season in Yankees pinstripes, but not a Silver Slugger Award. LeMahieu has rectified that situation by turning in a career year at the plate. He slashed .327/.375/.518 (136 OPS+) with a career-best 26 homers and 102 RBIs to help New York reach the AL Championship Series, where he hit a ninth-inning, game-tying home run to keep the Yankees alive in Game 6 against the Astros.

NL winner: Ozzie Albies, Braves (first)

Another first-time Silver Slugger Award winner, Albies led the NL with 189 hits to help Atlanta win its second straight NL East title. He slashed .295/.352/.500 with 43 doubles, eight triples and 24 homers, batting all over manager Brian Snitker's lineup.

#### THIRD BASE

AL winner: Alex Bregman, Astros (first)

Bregman had already established himself as a star entering the 2019 season, but he took it to another level at the plate, making himself a finalist for the AL MVP Award by posting a 1.105 OPS with 41 home runs and an MLB-leading 119 walks. This Silver Slugger Award is likely the first of many for the 25-year-old.

NL winner: Anthony Rendon, Nationals (second)

For the first time since 2014, a player not named Nolan Arenado has won the Silver Slugger Award at third base in the NL. Rendon was that third baseman in '14, and he is again in '19. Before bursting onto the national stage this October, he added fuel to the already raging debate over whether he or Arenado is the best third baseman in the NL. Rendon posted career highs in all three slash-line categories by hitting .319/.412/.598 with a career-best 34 home runs and 126 RBIs. He led the NL in RBIs and doubles, with 44.

#### SHORTSTOP

AL winner: Xander Bogaerts, Red Sox (third)

Bogaerts won his first Silver Slugger Award since receiving the honor in back-to-back seasons in 2015 and '16. The '19 campaign was the one Boston had been waiting for, when the 26-year-old shortstop tallied career bests in OPS (.939), doubles (52), home runs (33) and RBIs (117).

NL winner: Trevor Story, Rockies (second)

Story won his second straight Silver Slugger Award after hitting .294/.363/.554 with 35 homers and 23 stolen bases. Just the usual Story -- putting up big numbers while playing great defense at shortstop and showing why he's one of the fastest players in the game on the bases.

## OUTFIELD

AL winners

Mike Trout, Angels (seventh)

To no one's surprise, Trout takes home his seventh Silver Slugger Award in nine Major League seasons. The only exceptions being 2011, when he only played in 40 games as a rookie; and '17, when injury limited him to 114 games. Despite missing the last three weeks of the '19 regular season, Trout remains a candidate to win his third AL MVP Award after he led the Majors in on-base percentage (.438), slugging (.645) and OPS+ (185).

George Springer, Astros (second)

Though he was limited to 122 games by injury, Springer put together a career year at the plate, slashing .292/.383/.591 with 39 homers in just 479 at-bats. It's his first Silver Slugger honor since 2017, when he helped lead the Astros to the franchise's first World Series title.

Mookie Betts, Red Sox (third)

Betts' sustained excellence has produced yet another accolade, this one his third Silver Slugger Award. The 2018 AL MVP Award winner posted a .915 OPS with 29 homers and an MLB-leading 135 runs.

NL winners

Cody Bellinger, Dodgers (first)

Bellinger, a finalist for the NL MVP Award, opened the season white-hot, and though he cooled off some later in the year, he still finished with a .305/.406/.629 slash line, 47 homers and an NL-leading 351 total bases.

Christian Yelich, Brewers (third)

Yelich saw his season cut short in September by a right knee injury. But that didn't preclude him from finishing with eye-popping numbers -- the 2018 NL MVP Award winner led the league in batting average (.329) and on-base percentage (.429), while leading the Majors with a .671 slugging percentage and a 1.100 OPS.

Ronald Acuña Jr., Braves (first)

Acuña won the first of what will probably be many Silver Slugger Awards after we got to watch him over a full season for the first time. The 2018 NL Rookie of the Year Award winner became the youngest player to hit 40 or more homers (41) and steal 30 or more bases (37). He posted an .883 OPS as one of the key sluggers who led Atlanta to a second straight NL East championship.

## DESIGNATED HITTER

AL winner: Nelson Cruz, Twins (third)

He's an ageless wonder. Cruz was at the heart of a powerhouse Minnesota lineup, putting together a vintage campaign in which he posted a 1.031 OPS and slammed 41 homers -- including the 400th of his career -- in his age-38 season.

#### PITCHER

NL winner: Zack Greinke, D-backs/Astros (second)

How do you win the NL Silver Slugger Award when you're an AL pitcher? You start the season with the D-backs, hit really well and then get traded to the Astros. Greinke did that, earning his second Silver Slugger by far outdistancing any competition. He hit .280 (14-for-50) with four doubles, a triple and three homers before heading to Houston on July 31. While with the Astros, he picked up where he left off, singling in two Interleague at-bats.

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

#### **Chaim Bloom offers his views on Mookie Betts, J.D. Martinez situations**

Rob Bradford

Speaking for the first time since J.D. Martinez made his decision to stick with the Red Sox for at least one more year, Chief Baseball Officer Chaim Bloom joined the Bradfo Sho podcast to offer his perspective on the slugger not opting out of his current contract with the Sox and his current analysis of the Mookie Betts situation.

In the interview, Bloom admitted that Martinez's path went a long way to defining the Red Sox' offseason.

"I think that's fair," he said when asked about the Martinez decision serving as the Red Sox' decision-making springboard for the next few months. "Certainly J.D., rightly so and not just through what it is in his contract but obviously he's an elite player, he had the right to make a decision for himself and he should be able to make that decision with his own interest in mind. We're happy he chose to stay."

Was Bloom surprised Martinez chose not to enter into free agency?

"I don't know if I had too many preconceived notions on what he was going to do," he said. "I'm not sure it would be fair for me to come in here with that because I recognize in a lot of these cases it's easy for us for us to say, 'The player should do that,' or 'The player should do that.' And there are some cases where it might be very clear from the outside but we also have to recognize that these are personal decisions and contractually what the player has is the right to make a decision for himself. I would never want to assume that I know everything that is going to go into that decision for a player. But knowing certainly he caliber of hitter that he has and the impact he has on others on this club we're thrilled that he decided to stay."

Also of note was Bloom suggesting that the Red Sox wouldn't have closed the book on re-signing Martinez if the 32-year-old entered into free agency, with the understanding that the approach toward filling that position probably changes the minute he hits the open market.

"You know that obviously if he had opted out ... It doesn't mean we're never going to talk to him again," Bloom said. "We would have wanted to stay in contact with him and let the offseason play out but it's obviously a little bit of a different board so to speak than if he's here. The options that you might be looking at that point might be a little different. Especially early on in the offseason our responsibility is to still explore as many options as we can with everybody with this whole roster, to look under every rock to try and get better and to try and find things that work for the organization in the big picture. I don't think it

necessarily changes the number of things that we might explore but certainly, you're looking at a somewhat different set of possibilities if he opts out than if he stays."

As for Betts, who will be eligible for free agency after 2020, Bloom said he has been afforded a better perspective on the outfielder's situation thanks to his immersion into the Red Sox' organization over the last couple of weeks. Part of the process, according to the Red Sox' CBO, was reaching out to Betts after Bloom's hiring became official.

"I certainly know a lot more than I did on the day that I got here," he said. "Not just about him but about a lot of guys. Everything that surrounds his situation, but chiefly because of how excellent a player he is that seems to be the No. 1 topic on everyone's mind. He's just a phenomenal player. Obviously, we saw that up close with the Rays. It's something everyone in our industry appreciates. I'm still getting to know him but everything I know about him as a human being is also phenomenal. He's a pretty special person.

"I did talk to him a little bit early on. Of course, there are no short cuts to building relationships. I still have some work to do on that front with our group as a whole but I've tried to reach out to a number of the guys. They've all been great and that's been really nice. So I know a little bit more than I did in terms of getting my arms around the situation and as a group how we're going to address it. In that regard, I'm not sure it's different than any situation with any player. It's a little more visible. Obviously, it's an elite player in a situation that is going to get a lot of attention. But it's the same process of getting to know the situation as it would be really with anything going on in the organization."

Bloom's next order of business will be to attend the GM Meetings in Scottsdale, Ariz. early next week.

### **J.D. Martinez gives Red Sox get out of jail free card**

Jim Hackett

The Red Sox have an uncanny way of dropping news or in this case, having news drop on them while the Patriots dominate the conversation, headlines and spotlight.

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Monday was just another example of it, but this time it was news of the pleasant variety. Following the aftermath that was the Patriots' first loss of the season on Sunday Night Football to the Ravens, J.D. Martinez surprised many, by opting into his contract for 2020.

Martinez subsequently gave the Red Sox the get out of jail free card they so desperately needed.

How does keeping \$23.75 million on a luxury cap riddled payroll provide relief you may ask?

Simply stated, the current construct of the Red Sox payroll forces the owners to the sidelines right where they belong. There will be no nonsensical "splashes" of the Tom Werner bad idea marketing variety like Pablo Sandoval, Hanley Ramirez or Carl Crawford for that matter. For those with a touch of grey, add in Jack Clark or any of the overpaid busts that have been brought into town that sit on the Red Sox payroll like the congealed fat in a container of day old Chinese food. Nope. Not this time. The Red Sox are cash strapped and in the frustrating case of the fiscally moronic Red Sox of the last several years, being cash strapped is a good thing.

What an odd twist of fate, no money equaling good times...

I liken this situation to that of Grandma Gilmore (Happy Gilmore's loving grandmother), when confronted about owing the IRS over \$270,000,000 in back taxes. When hearing the news from the tax collector, Happy begrudgingly asks, "Grandma, you didn't pay your taxes?" Grandma responds, "Well I would have...but I didn't have any money."

And that's that. If you have ever been broke, there are subtle moments of confidence that arise. Collections agents can hammer you all they want but if you don't have the money, you just can't pay. The Red Sox being securely over the luxury tax puts their owner's hands firmly in handcuffs for a while and I'm telling you, that's a good thing.

Enter Red Sox new chief baseball officer, Chaim Bloom.

With Red Sox owners in timeout for the foreseeable future, young Bloom can seemingly operate in the role he was actually hired for; that is... to run the baseball operation.

Someday, the Red Sox will be free of the pork fat clogging their contractual arteries and Bloom will be able to get to work. The dead contracts of Sandoval, Ramirez, Pedroia and Rusney Castillo among others will all eventually taper off. David Price and his \$30,000,000 annual albatross will be gone eventually too. At that point your core of talent that is under contract like Xander Bogaerts and maybe even Martinez for an added year or two, will be looked upon as relatively efficient building blocks.

The end result being that the Red Sox wealth of financial resources will be freed and can be deployed properly for players that can actually pay it back like Rafael Devers. He will command and receive a mint when his time comes and that is an investment I would have no problem with. If the Red Sox are smart they will lock him up before his time is due.

Freedom. Financial freedom, at least to the point where the Red Sox can actually make well-reasoned choices versus panic stricken splashes. That is one of the blessings that this week's opt-in from a very productive J.D. Martinez gives them. The other, has a direct correlation to one Mookie Betts.

Does anyone out there think for a second that the Red Sox wouldn't have overreacted and overreached contractually for Betts or a player of lesser merit had Martinez opted out? Please. Just look at the track record. I fully expected Martinez to opt out before the news broke and prepared myself for the ensuing nausea that would follow. Months of panicked debate about Mookie Betts and how to fill his and Martinez's gaping void. Or worse, considering tying up \$300-400 million to secure Betts for another decade, guaranteeing at least ten more years of fiscal and organizational imprisonment.

Look, regarding the situation of Betts and his future who knows. Can they sign him? Does it make sense? What kind of haul can they get if they trade him? Should they ride it out and make another run for it in 2020?

These are all questions that young Chaim Bloom has to answer and figure out and thanks to J.D. Martinez surprisingly opting in, at least he is in position to make those choices. Had Martinez opted out, things could have been a lot harder on the young executive to stabilize this organization in the presence of its meddling owners and demanding fan base.

You can thank Martinez for that. He is one of the few on this roster that will actually perform over his contract and his presence gives the Red Sox the freedom of choices moving forward. They don't have financial or contractual freedom yet, but they do have a solid base from which to decide and that makes the Red Sox standing today better than it was last week.

Bloom can do his job now. Thanks J.D.

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

### **Red Sox' Mookie Betts, Xander Bogaerts earn Silver Slugger awards**

Justin Leger

Red Sox stars Mookie Betts and Xander Bogaerts both took home some hardware on Thursday.

Betts earned his second straight Silver Slugger award (third total) while Bogaerts also tallied the third of his seven-year career.

Fresh off his 2018 American League MVP season, Betts hit .295 with 29 home runs, 80 RBI and a .915 OPS in 2019. He also was brought home his fourth consecutive Gold Glove award earlier this week.

Bogaerts arguably was the Red Sox MVP last season as he hit .309 with 33 homers, 117 RBI and a .939 OPS.

These accolades are a reminder of just how important this offseason is for the Red Sox as they face an important decision regarding their prized right fielder. Betts is set to become a free agent after the 2020 campaign and the two sides reportedly have not gotten anywhere in contract extension talks.

### **It's time for Mookie Betts to tell the Red Sox what he really wants**

John Tomase

It's the question none of us can really answer: What does Mookie Betts want?

As the Red Sox embark on their most momentous offseason since Theo Epstein took the helm 17 years ago, determining Betts's future is the primary item on chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom's agenda.

But beyond a stated desire to reach free agency, we know frustratingly little about Betts's long-term goals. Does he want to stay in Boston? Does he want to be the highest-paid player in the game? Would he like to play closer to his home in Tennessee? Might he want to give the National League a try?

During Bloom's introductory press conference, owner John Henry shed some light on how the Betts conundrum factored into the interview process. And his answer revealed the key unknown the Red Sox are grappling with as they try to determine whether to keep or trade their homegrown MVP.

"It was more of a general discussion," Henry said. "We talked about Mookie, J.D., other issues, but we didn't focus on, oh, what should we do? Because you're going to be looking at a number of factors, including where Mookie wants to play for the long term."

"Including where Mookie wants to play for the long term" suggests the Red Sox have their doubts that place is Boston, which is a reasonable position to take. Though Betts periodically declared his love for the city last season, usually in response to suggestions that he's looking forward to taking his talents elsewhere, actions matter more than words.

And thus far, Betts has shown little inclination to engage with the Red Sox on a long-term extension, even though the parameters should be pretty clear, as Harold Reynolds noted on the MLB Network. CEO Sam Kennedy recently told MassLive.com that the sides haven't talked extension yet, but it feels like that conversation could be a one-and-done proposition, because the market is well-established.

102 people are talking about this

Betts can rightly argue that he's better than both Bryce Harper and Manny Machado. The Red Sox can counter that he's a good couple of notches below perennial MVP favorite Mike Trout.

It just so happens that all three signed massive contracts last winter. The Phillies gave Harper 13 years and \$330 million. Machado signed with San Diego for 10 years and \$300 million. Trout then trumped them both by inking a massive 12-year, \$430 million extension.

Slotting Betts onto that continuum isn't particularly challenging. He falls between Harper and Trout, though his relative lack of size makes him a bigger breakdown risk. But let's just split the difference between \$330

and \$430 and say he's worth \$380 million at the high end of the scale and \$350 million on the low end. An offer would then take shape thusly: 10-12 years for \$350-\$380 million.

If Betts agrees, then sign him up, accept that you're not dropping the payroll below \$208 million this winter, and start planning for a future built around Betts, Xander Bogaerts, Rafael Devers, and J.D. Martinez. (I've already argued that 10-year, \$300 million contracts are bad business no matter who's signing them, but it's not my money).

If he balks, which feels more likely, then the Red Sox should begin trade talks the second they hang up the phone, because carrying him into the season risks losing him for nothing. While they could try to ship him out by July 31, how do they make that case if they're contending? Better to tear off the band-aid and start planning for life after Betts immediately.

There's no reason to let this uncertainty linger. Mookie's market is clear. Put the ball in his court and see what he does with it.

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

### **Mets' center field fixes: Mookie Betts pipe dream to a cheaper Red Sox trade**

Joel Sherman

The Mets could use Carlos Beltran. The player. The one they signed in 2005.

Because Beltran, the manager, encounters a roster with many issues. The Mets will need a starter if Zack Wheeler leaves and starting depth no matter what. The bullpen requires augmentation. The Mets might have three third basemen — J.D. Davis, Jed Lowrie and Jeff McNeil — or none. But as big as any issue — perhaps bigger — is center field; the position Beltran played with such two-way brilliance.

In 2019, when they went offense with Michael Conforto or Brandon Nimmo, it cost defensively — the Mets ranked 26th in the majors in center field defense by Fangraphs' measurements. When defense was prioritized with Juan Lagares, he turned in the worst OPS-plus by any Met allowed to bat 275 times since Joe McEwing in 2003 — and his defense was not as strong as in the past.

Lagares' 2020 option was not picked up. The Mets should also eliminate their penchant to force feed a hitter into center while tolerating sub-par defense. Nimmo and Conforto should be limited in center, used perhaps when groundball artist Marcus Stroman is starting. That could toughen decisions for Beltran for corner at-bats, should Yoenis Cespedes get healthy to join Conforto, Nimmo and perhaps Davis and McNeil.

The Mets already know they are going to be iffy defensively at first with Pete Alonso, at second with a more limited Robinson Cano, at third pretty much with whomever they play and at catcher when Wilson Ramos is behind the plate. They have to begin to shore up that side of the ball. This is a golden age of center field defense. Someone such as Pittsburgh's Starling Marte might rate below average, but that is only because average now is so superb. The problem is the Mets have been well below average.

Some thoughts on what the Mets should do in center:

1. Mookie Betts, Red Sox — Let's start with the pipe dream. And let's start with a blockbuster totally made up by me: Betts for Syndergaard — Mookie for Thor.

J.D. Martinez did not opt out of three years at \$62.5 million left on his contract. Thus, the Red Sox are faced with a tougher puzzle to meet their mandate to drop below the \$208 million luxury tax threshold. Betts is due about \$30 million next year, which also is his walk season, a combination that assures Boston will not get equal value for one of the best players in the world, should they opt to trade him.

Syndergaard would cost one-third of Betts for 2020, has control through 2021 and addresses an area (rotation) Boston needs to address — and the Red Sox could spin Syndergaard for further savings and more youngsters should they choose. This fits Brodie Van Wagenen's bold showmanship. But would the Wilpons approve a trade that would move them near the threshold (or over)? Would Boston do more than think about trading Betts? Betts plays right field, but he would be terrific in center.

2. Jackie Bradley Jr., Red Sox — OK, back to reality. Bradley is due about \$11 million for his walk year and is a pretty obvious chop for Boston, who could then move Betts to center. The publicly available defensive metrics don't love him, but to the eye Bradley is a human defensive highlight reel. Bradley is frustrating because his offense teases in spots, but he has never been able to translate that into consistent success. One question when considering offense and cost: Would the Mets be better off with Nimmo in center over Bradley and bringing in a righty-hitting high-end defender complement such as Houston's Jake Marisnick or San Francisco's Kevin Pillar?

3. Marte, Pirates — Fangraphs metrics are down on him defensively. But I asked multiple teams for what their proprietary numbers show and he is more average (especially because of a strong arm) and scouts grade Marte higher than that. He also has a PED-related suspension on his ledger. But that didn't stop the Mets from acquiring Cano; plus Marte's stats have stayed consistent since his ban.

He offers speed, power and plays hard. Marte is due \$11.5 million this year with a \$12.5 million 2021 option (\$1 million buyout). The Pirates don't have a GM yet, and the next one, like predecessor Neal Huntington, will always have to worry about payroll. Could the Mets build a deal around Nimmo, with Pittsburgh getting an extra year of control with the lefty swinger at a total cost probably under the \$24 million due Marte the next two years?

4. Enrique Hernandez, Dodgers — He's a jack-of-all-trades, but that includes being a pretty good center fielder. Hernandez is a free agent after 2020. The Dodgers were interested in Edwin Diaz in July and are looking for closer insurance (or more) for Kenley Jansen. Los Angeles runs the kind of organization that feels it can get the talent out of someone such as Diaz. The Mets would not do this straight up because they also feel like they can fix Diaz. But what if, say, a cost controlled starter such as Ross Stripling were added to Hernandez plus the Dodgers agreed to take on Lowrie's \$9 million for 2020 as the price of doing business?

5. Kevin Kiermaier, Rays — In three-way trade talks with the Marlins last year that would have redirected J.T. Realmuto to the Mets, the Rays were focused on McNeil, the kind of low-cost Swiss Army Knife who can hit that Tampa Bay craves. Kiermaier is a terrific defender and all-out player with a bit of pop. He turns 30 in April, has been injury prone and is still due three years at \$36 million. So to get McNeil, the Rays have to give up more. They are swimming in just the kind of young arms the Mets could use. How about Yonny Chirinos?