

Thompson among trio Tribe inks to Minors deals Players also receive invitations to Spring Training

By Anthony Castrovince MLB.com @castrovince

CLEVELAND -- In an annual depth-padding development, the Indians signed a few players to Minor League deals with non-roster invitations to Spring Training on Saturday. Left-hander Josh Smith, outfielder Trayce Thompson and right-hander James Hoyt will all be in the mix in Goodyear, Ariz. Hoyt was non-tendered (i.e. removed from the 40-man roster) by the Tribe on Friday.

Thompson has the most Major League experience of the group, as well as the distinction of being younger brother of Klay Thompson of the Golden State Warriors -- whom Clevelanders will quickly tell you blew a 3-1 lead to the Cavaliers in the 2016 NBA Finals. The Thompsons' father, Mychal, played 14 seasons in the NBA.

The younger Thompson, 27, played 202 games with the White Sox, Dodgers and A's from 2015-18 and has hit a combined .206 with a .664 OPS while playing all three outfield positions. He opened '18 on the A's roster after being designated for assignment by the Dodgers at the end of Spring Training, then was acquired by the White Sox in a cash deal in April. He finished the season with Triple-A Charlotte.

Smith, 29, spent 2018 bouncing between Double-A Portland and Triple-A Pawtucket in the Red Sox system. He went 9-5 with a 3.01 ERA in 28 games, including 14 starts, for Pawtucket. He also made 10 appearances in the Dominican winter league. He owns a career Minor League ERA of 4.01 in 218 games.

Hoyt, 32, was acquired from the Astros in a minor mid-season trade. He made 65 relief appearances for the Astros in 2016-17 (4.42 ERA in 71 1/3 innings), but spent all but one game of '18 in Triple-A. The Indians never had him on their big league roster. He pitched 2 2/3 innings at Triple-A Columbus before succumbing to a knee injury.

The Indians' other previously announced non-roster invitees are left-hander R.C. Orlan, right-hander Shao-Ching Chiang and infielder Mike Freeman.

If Trevor Bauer was Cleveland Indians' GM, he would trade Corey Kluber and himself

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com | Posted December 01, 2018 at 05:19 PM | Updated December 01, 2018 at 06:03 PM

Can Corey Kluber and Trevor Bauer co-exist?

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Teammates do not always get along and most of the time it doesn't matter.

Gold Glovers Robby Alomar and Omar Vizquel were not crazy about each other, but when they played for the Indians in the middle of the infield they were poetry in motion.

Do similar tensions exist between two of the Indians' top starting pitchers in Trevor Bauer and Corey Kluber? Or is it just the clinical way Bauer's mind works?

Bauer was interviewed on MLB Network's Hot Stove show Thursday morning. He was asked about rumors that the Indians were going to trade a starting pitcher to keep their payroll under control. The main candidates were Kluber, Carlos Carrasco and himself.

In a matter of fact manner, Bauer said that Carrasco's and his "surplus value" was so high that it didn't make sense for the Indians to trade them. He didn't come out and say it, but the implication was clear -- if the Indians were going to trade a pitcher this winter it should be Kluber, whose surplus value is reduced because he'll make \$17 million in 2019.

It was a statement that almost every GM would make -- behind closed doors. To hear it from a player, speaking about a teammate, was rare.

To add fuel to the fire, later that same day Bauer, who lives to pitch and Tweet, told a Twitter troll who said he wasn't in the same league as Kluber, "Plot twist, I was better than Kluber this year."

Kluber went 20-7 with a 2.89 ERA in 33 starts. He led the AL in innings pitched and finished third in the Cy Young voting.

Bauer was on track to challenge for the Cy Young, but took a line drive off his right leg on Aug. 12 and suffered a stress fracture. He ended the season at 12-6 with a 2.21 ERA and 221 strikeouts in 175 1/3 innings.

No doubt Bauer believes he had a better year than Kluber. But it's hard to say if there was ill will behind his Tweet because in the same Hot Stove interview he said that the Indians should trade him going into 2020 because his "surplus value" would not be as high as it is this year. Bauer added that the Indians probably couldn't afford to sign him -- even to a one-year deal -- to keep him out of the free-agent market.

The Indians are expected to trade Kluber or Bauer this winter. That is especially true if they are able to sign Carrasco to a contract extension.

If that happens, it will not be because of the relationship between the two pitchers. When a team has talent like Kluber and Bauer, a manager and organization does its best to keep them happy or at least in separate corners.

No, if the Indians trade Kluber or Bauer it will be because they need to fill holes on the current big-league club to help them win a fourth straight AL Central title and return to the postseason. If that happens, depending on who goes and who stays, the Indians' locker room could be a lot duller place.

How will Pirates deal with Lonnie Chisenhall's balky calves

Lonnie Chisenhall has moved on to the Steel City as the veteran drain on the Indians continues.

Chisenhall signed a one-year, \$2.75 million deal with Pittsburgh earlier in the week. The Pirates loaded it with \$3 million of incentives based on plate appearances to try and keep Chisenhall on the field.

It will be a challenge.

In the last two years, the Indians paid Chisenhall almost \$10 million to see him play 111 games -- 29 last season and 82 in 2017 -- because of a series of calf injuries. Last season Chisenhall went on the disabled list with a strained left calf on July 3 and didn't play again.

In an interview with MLB's Hot Stove, Chisenhall said that after four or five weeks following his July 3 injury, he felt fine. He said he's changed his treatment program and diet, but most of all he's been doing more "explosive" running.

When Chisenhall has been on the field the last two years, he's been productive. He hit .288 with 12 homers and 53 RBI in 2017. Last year he hit .321 with nine RBI.

"I feel like I've been helpful on both sides of the ball," said Chisenhall, "But getting in the lineup has been tough the last year and a half."

Chisenhall is just one of a group of veteran Indians free agents who were always considered long shots to re-sign with the Tribe. He spent 11 years with the Indians. Josh Tomlin spent 13, while Michael Brantley spent 10. Cody Allen spent eight and catcher Yan Gomes was traded Friday after six years with the organization.

Erik Gonzalez, who was traded to the Pirates in October, didn't have as much big-league time as his teammates, but he spent 10 years in the organization.

That's a lot of experience to lose in one winter.

How will Roberto Perez do as Tribe's No.1 catcher?

On Sunday Roberto Perez will head home after what he feels was a productive trip to winter ball in the Dominican Republic.

Perez, who became the Tribe's starting catcher on Friday night when the Indians sent Gomes to the Nationals, hit .323 (21-for-65) with seven homers for Licey.

"I was catching and playing every day," said Perez in an email earlier in the week. "I think this has really helped me."

Gomes won the starting job last season and never gave it back. He hit .266 with 16 homers and 48 RBI and went to his first All-Star Game.

Perez hit a career-low .168 (30-for-179) with two homers and 19 RBI. He will make \$2.5 million in 2019 compared to Gomes' \$7 million. In 2020, Perez will make \$3.5 million with club options for 2021 (\$5.5 million) and 2022 (\$7 million).

"The role Roberto played was a difficult one, especially offensively, after he had played almost every day in the minors," said Tribe catching coach Sandy Alomar. "To be a backup at a young age is hard. That being said, he always delivered with his defense and he feels his offense will improve dramatically if he plays more games."

Yu Chang named one of AFL's top 25 prospects

The Arizona Fall League likes to call itself the finishing school for the big leagues. While it's still unclear if Yu Chang needs a bit more polishing, his trip to the Arizona desert definitely did the Tribe's infielder some good.

He hit .337 (29-for-86) with four doubles, four homers and 17 RBI. He posted a .919 OPS and was named one of the top 25 prospects in the league by Jim Callis of MLB.com.

Chen came in at No. 22. Callis critiqued him this way, "Normally a shortstop, Chang has power, arm strength and agility to profile well offensively and defensively at the hot corner."

International talent: According to Indians Prospective, the Tribe has drawn a bead on at least 13 international free agents for the 2019-2020 signing period. They can't start signing them until July 2.

In closing, some names you may remember

Here are some names you may remember from days past with the Tribe:

*The Dodgers have hired catcher Chris Gimenez, who had three tours with the Tribe, as their game-planning coach on the big-league staff.

*Jim Riggles, former third base coach for the Tribe in 2000, has been hired by the Mets to be Mickey Callaway's bench coach.

*Shelly Duncan, who played for the Tribe from 2010-12, has been hired by Toronto as its major league field coordinator.

*Mark Budzinski, a member of Terry Francona's coaching staff last year, interviewed with the Twins before the Blue Jays hired him as their first-base coach.

*Lefty Oliver Drake, who appeared with a record five teams last season including the Indians, was claimed on waivers by the Rays.

*Lefty Hoby Milner, a Rule 5 pick by the Indians in 2016, was outrighted to Class AAA by the Rays.

*Good luck to Michael Salazar, Tribe athletic trainer, who has taken a job with the Padres as first assistant to the head athletic trainer. Salazar spent 12 seasons with the Indians.

Cleveland Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor finishes 2018 with Bob Feller 'Man of the Year' award from baseball writers

By Joe Noga, [cleveland.com jnoga@cleveland.com](mailto:jnoga@cleveland.com)

CLEVELAND, Ohio — Before the season began, Cleveland Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor talked frequently about wanting to “finish” in 2018 after a disappointing playoff run the previous year.

From March through October, Lindor proved himself the Tribe's most complete player, and although the Indians again did not finish where they wanted in the end, it was Lindor's consistent play from the top that led the way to a third straight division title and postseason appearance.

For that, Cleveland's chapter of the Baseball Writers Association of America named Lindor the Bob Feller Man of the Year award winner, given annually since 1946 to the team's top player.

American League MVP finalist Jose Ramirez, Cy Young Award finalist Corey Kluber and the team's ERA leader, Trevor Bauer, were also nominated for the award.

Lindor, who turned 25 in November, batted .277 with an .871 OPS, 38 home runs, 92 RBI and 25 stolen bases. He tied for the MLB lead in runs scored (129) and was second with 58 multi-hit games. Lindor's 38 home runs broke his own franchise record for a shortstop, and he became the first shortstop in major league history with at least 35 home runs, 40 doubles, and 20 steals in the same season. Lindor's nine leadoff home runs led all of baseball and broke Grady Sizemore's previous franchise high set in 2008.

Lindor was named an American League All-Star for the third consecutive season and earned AL Player of the Month honors in May. He was a finalist for the AL Gold Glove Award at shortstop and won his second straight AL Silver Slugger award at the position.

He launched a two-run homer in the fifth inning April 17 against Minnesota in the first of two games with the Twins in his native Puerto Rico. The high drive to right sent the crowd at Hiram Bithorn Stadium into a frenzy when it landed beyond the fence.

Lindor's second career walk-off homer beat the Twins again on Aug. 8 at Progressive Field.

In separate games against the Royals (May 12) and Twins (May 31) he collected two doubles and two home runs, becoming the first Indians leadoff hitter with four extra-base hits in a game since Tito Francona in 1964.

Lindor's two home runs against Houston in the American League Division Series were the only ones the Indians hit in their three postseason games.

In just his third full major-league season, Lindor continues to improve in every area of his game, and plays with a joy and passion that is evident to all who get to watch him on a regular basis.

“I have to remind myself sometimes of his age, because he's so advanced in so many things on the field, just the way he carries himself,” manager Terry Francona said in October.

“Sometimes what you see isn't what there is. With Frankie, it is. That smile, he loves playing baseball... If I had his tools, I would, too. But he's very competitive, he cares about the right things, and we're really glad that he's ours, because he's so special.”

Closer Cody Allen wins Good Guy award from Cleveland's Chapter of the Baseball Writers of America

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio – Last season was not the kind of impression Cody Allen wanted to make with free agency hovering over his shoulder. But Allen, the Indians' franchise leader in saves, never hid and never ducked a question from a reporter.

It's the main reason that Cleveland's chapter of the Baseball Writers Association of America elected Allen from a crowded field as the winner of the Frank Gibbons-Steve Olin Good Guy award. The award has been presented by the writers since 1968 to the Indians' player, coach, manager or team employee who understands the media's job when it comes to covering a baseball team.

The writers also elected shortstop Francisco Lindor as the Bob Feller Man of the Year award.

Allen was elected from a field that included nominees Jason Kipnis, Andrew Miller, Trevor Bauer, Michael Brantley and Mike Clevinger.

In six plus years Allen proved himself not only to be the Tribe's best closer, but its most durable reliever. Besides his 149 saves, Allen holds franchise relief records with 456 appearances and 564 strikeouts. In the last five years he leads AL closers with 149 saves. Zach Britton is next with 142.

Allen's workload and problems with his curveball appeared to catch up to him last season. He went 4-6 with 4.70 ERA in 70 appearances covering 67 innings. He struck out 80, walked 33 and allowed 11 home runs.

The ERA, walks and homers allowed were career highs.

Allen became the franchise leader in saves (No. 140) in a 3-2 win over the Royals on July 4 at Kauffman Stadium. For the season he converted 27 saves in 32 chances. Allen, Craig Kimbrell and Kenley Jansen are the only closers with 25 or more saves per season since 2015.

This winter Allen is one of 11 Indians on the free agent market. After 5 ½ years of elite pitching, his bargaining position wasn't helped by his performance in 2018. But he has drawn interest from several clubs in the early stages of free agency.

After the Indians were eliminated in the ALDS, Allen told reporters, "It's just unfortunate I wasn't able to help out the way I would've liked. I feel like for my entire career up to this point, I feel like I had done a pretty good job of trying to help supplement the team and win games. This year I didn't do that. I fell short.

"But it's baseball. It's inevitable. It's going to happen. I'm not afraid of putting the work in to be better."

Allen, 30, was the Indians 23rd pick in the 2011 draft. He rocketed through the system, making his big-league debut on July 20, 2012 against Baltimore.

The Good Guy award is named after Frank Gibbons, a columnist from the old Cleveland Press and Steve Olin, the Indians pitcher who died in a boating accident during spring training in 1993.

Cleveland Indians invite three, including Trayce Thompson, to camp on minor-league deals

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio – The Indians on Saturday invited two pitchers and an outfielder to spring training on minor-league deals.

The pitchers are right-hander James Hoyt, taken off the Tribe's 40-man roster on Friday, and left-hander Josh Smith. Trayce Thompson, whose brother Klay helped beat the Cavaliers in last season's NBA Finals, is the outfielder.

The Indians acquired Hoyt in July from Houston. He appeared in only three games at Class AAA Columbus because of a right knee injury. He pitched for the Astros in parts of the 2016, 2017 and 2018 seasons, compiling a 2-0 record with a 4.40 ERA in 66 relief appearances.

Hoyt started his professional career by paying \$100 for a tryout to play for the independent Yuma Scorpions. Jose Canseco was his manager. Last season Smith, 29, went 9-5 with a 3.01 ERA in 28 appearances, including 14 starts, for Class AAA Pawtucket, Boston's top farm club. He struck out 97, walked 43 and allowed 86 hits in 98 2/3 innings.

The Brewers drafted Smith in the 26th round in 2011. He just finished pitching winter ball for Escogido in the Dominican Republic, posting a 2.08 ERA in 10 games.

Thompson, 27, was the White Sox's second-round pick in 2009. He has played in the big leagues with Chicago, the Dodgers and Oakland. Last season Thompson was designated for assignment by the Dodgers at the end of spring training, but opened the season with the A's. The White Sox re-acquired him on April 19 and he hit .116 (14-for-121) with three homers and nine RBI in 48 games.

He finished the season at Class AAA Charlotte, hitting .213 (34-for-160) with 12 doubles, four homers and 15 RBI.

Why are Cleveland Indians fans howling at the moon over trade of Yan Gomes? Hey, Hoynsie!

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com | Posted December 01, 2018 at 10:33 AM | Updated December 01, 2018 at 11:12 AM

Did the trade of Yan Gomes really help the Indians?

Hey, Hoynsie: The Indians got nothing for Yan Gomes from the Washington Nationals that will help them next year. Unless the player to be named is great, they got nothing back. I imagine his departure will not have a positive impact on the pitchers who remain here. I cannot believe they did a salary dump. Every trade they have made this winter makes no sense. What the heck are they doing? -- Dennis Nosco.

Hey, Dennis: The Indians are trying to thread the needle -- trim payroll and get younger while staying on top of a rebuilding AL Central. They say it's not going to be a fire sale, but contending and rebuilding at the same time is almost an impossible thing to do.

Is Roberto Perez really going to be the starting catcher?

Hey, Hoynsie: The Yan Gomes trade is a perfect example of why this team hasn't won a World Series in over 70 years. Can't wait to watch Roberto Perez and his .168 average next year. He is not a MLB quality player. He belongs on the Lake Erie Crushers. It's about time for the media to start calling for the Dolans to sell the team to someone who is more interested in winning than building more concession stands. -- Sean Skinner.

Hey, Sean: Perez had a bad season in 2018, no doubt. But in the past, when he's received regular playing time, he's had success at the plate. He played well in the postseason in 2016 and he's always been a solid defensive catcher with a good arm.

One more thing, the Indians have won more games in the AL over the last six years than any other team. Let's wait and see what the rest of the offseason holds.

Was the Yan Gomes trade a salary dump?

Hey, Hoynsie: I completely understand the Indians moving a pitcher to fill holes, don't even care much which one because they can't afford them and we can fill several needs with the right move. Trading Yan Gomes for a AA outfielder straight up baffles me. I would propose if the Tribe was that desperate for an outfielder they could have put Gomes in left field and played the terrible Roberto Perez all they wanted behind the plate. I feel cheated in the rhetoric coming from the Tribe that it was going to trade from depth to supplement a weak roster when, in reality, it is more shed payroll at any cost. -- Joe Cepec, Powell.

Hey, Joe: I know you've been a fan for a long time. And I know by now you realize the Indians didn't trade Gomes straight up for a minor-league outfielder (Daniel Johnson). They also received right-hander Jefry Rodriguez and a player to be named.

But you are right about it being a salary dump. The Indians need to reduce a franchise-record payroll from 2018 and Chris Antonetti, president of baseball operations, said he considered catching a position where they had depth and strength. I would imagine the pitching trade you referred to is next on the agenda.

Will Eric Haase get a shot as Tribe's starting catcher?

Hey Hoynsie: With the trade of Yan Gomes and Roberto Perez being the Tribe's only experienced catcher on the roster at the moment, do you feel the brass will give Eric Haase an opportunity in spring training to earn the job? Or do you think they will try to sign a veteran catcher to keep the position warm until Haase is ready? -- Andy Mees, Sandusky.

Hey, Andy: I think there's still a lot of time left in the offseason, which promises to bring a lot of changes. I would imagine the Indians will try to add an experienced catcher to handle the pitching staff at Class AAA Columbus and maybe backup Perez in the big leagues.

But right now, it looks like Perez and Haase will be the top two catchers going into spring training. Haase showed power at Columbus, but I have some concerns about his throwing.

A fan asks Paul Dolan not to break up the Indians

Hey, Hoynsie: Can you please tell Indians owner Paul Dolan not to trade Trevor Bauer, Corey Kluber or Carlos Carrasco. If he does, we will never have a shot at the World Series again in my lifetime. I'm 68 years old and have waited 68 years to win a World Series.

I'm sure I don't need to tell him that he has a great nucleus on his team. Now is not the time to break it up to save money. Now is the time to fill in the missing pieces and go all the way to the top. -- Alan Groveman, South Euclid.

Hey, Alan: I don't think the Indians are going to trade the nucleus of this team. Dolan and the front office feel they can trade a couple of talented players, lighten the payroll and still win the AL Central in 2019. What they do if and when they get to the postseason is another question all together.

Where is Jason Kipnis going to play for the Tribe?

Hey, Hoynsie: Since the Tribe has said Jose Ramirez and Francisco Lindor are off limits concerning a trade, how will the Indians solve the Yandy Diaz, Ramirez and Jason Kipnis problem? And please don't say Kipnis will play left field. Given the Tribe's "market restraints," I suggest going in the opposite direction, emphasizing contact hitting, speed and outfield defense. Jordan Luplow appears to have such skills. -- David Frederick, St. Augustine, Fla.

Hey, David: Seeing that it's only Dec. 1, here's my solution to your problem. Diaz at third, Ramirez at second and Kipnis in left. Yes, I told you what you didn't want to hear, but a lot of things could change between now and opening day.

Could the Indians have signed Danny Salazar for less?

Hey, Hoynsie: Had the Indians gone to arbitration with Danny Salazar, considering his history of injury, would he have come out with with a one-year deal worth \$4.5 million? -- Mark Jelichek.

Hey, Mark: It depends.

A player eligible for arbitration can have his his salary cut by only 20 percent. Since Salazar earned \$5 million last year, if he went to arbitration and the Indians asked for the maximum salary cut and won their case, he would have made \$4 million for 2019.

So he comes out \$500,000 ahead for not throwing a pitch in anger last season. It's great to be young and a big league ballplayer isn't it?

Any update on new logo for the Indians?

Hey, Hoynsie: Any information on when we will see the new logo that will replace Chief Wahoo? -- Tony, Willowick.

Hey, Tony: No, there isn't. I'm thinking if the Indians do add another logo, it won't be for a couple of years, if at all.

When the Indians unveiled their "refreshed" 2019 uniforms in November, I was told that they consider their team logos to be the Block C and script Indians. In 2019 they'll wear a shoulder patch representing the 2019 All-Star Game that will be played at Progressive Fields.

There appears to be no great rush to replace Chief Wahoo with another logo.

How can the Indians improve their postseason performance?

Hey Hoynsie: I read your piece about the Tribe staying competitive despite all the free agent losses expected. You're right -- after a stretch of winning seasons for a small market team, eventually the worm will turn -- and it is. However, there is one big issue with this inevitable occurrence -- when you get to the postseason you have to perform because your window is small. Do you have any thoughts on how to get the players to perform better (i.e. Jose Ramirez) and Terry Francona to manage better? In my view, a players' poor postseason performance quickly becomes a big monkey on his back, and frankly, Tito is too loyal and doesn't make the hard decisions. -- Bobby, Albuquerque, N.M.

Hey, Bobby: In Francona you're talking about one of the best postseason managers in history. He's taken nine teams to the postseason and has a 40-29 (.580) record, including two World Series titles. I think Francona knows what he's doing in October.

Player wise, I think it helps to have some success entering the postseason. Ramirez was in a six-week funk headed into the ALDS and it continued. Then again he was one of the keys to the Tribe's offense and those kind of hitters are always going to get pitched to carefully, especially in the postseason.

But the more times you get to the postseason, the more times you have a chance to turn that monkey into Edwin Encarnacion's parrot. Ramirez and the Indians should have another good chance to do that in 2019.

'Americas Favorite Veterinarian' Reveals The One Thing Every Dog Owner Should Do

Nick Cafardo / Has Dodgers manager Dave Roberts gotten over losing last two World Series?

By Nick Cafardo

More than a month has passed and Dodgers manager Dave Roberts, who has lost the last two World Series, is trying to get past the agony of defeat to the Red Sox by stressing the future.

On the day we spoke with Roberts he was in Napa Valley, Calif., visiting his vineyard, Red Stitch, which he owns with former major leaguer Rich Aurilia and hedge fund mogul John Micek.

"Not hurting about it, but still disappointed," Roberts said. "But a lot of my focus now is toward '19. It was still a tremendous year, but that Red Sox team was one of the best teams in recent history, so obviously there's only one champion, but any time you lose a World Series there's a lot of accomplishment but still some disappointment."

With back-to-back losses in the World Series, we're sure Roberts has heard the comparisons to coach Marv Levy and the Buffalo Bills, who lost four consecutive Super Bowls. Yet Roberts has managed to keep things in perspective.

"It's one of those things where you have to be able to bucket not winning the World Series, but not discredit what the organization and what the people in the organization have done to get to that point," Roberts said. "It's not easy to win it all. To get there is still a success in its own right. You just have to do what you can to give yourself the opportunity to get there again. That's our goal."

It's tough to think of areas in which the Dodgers need to improve. They have decent starting pitching. They were able to retain Clayton Kershaw, who elected not to opt out of his contract. They will be getting back Corey Seager after he missed most of this past season because of Tommy John surgery and a bad hip. Roberts said Seager will be back at shortstop and should be 100 percent by spring training. The Dodgers do need to revamp their bullpen or at least add another piece or two.

"I don't know if it's personnel," Roberts said. "I just think we have to play better baseball in that series. I think offensively if you look at our club, in both of these series, we just didn't play well. When you're facing really good pitching and you're facing arms out of the pen that you're not really familiar with, you've got to find a way to win the bases and win 90 feet and put runs across. We haven't done a good job. It's the biggest stage and looking back we didn't perform."

Roberts, who will forever remain a Red Sox hero after stealing a key base in Game 4 of the 2004 American League Championship Series against Mariano Rivera and the Yankees, said that while he does self-evaluate, "I just don't think in this situation, when you lose, four games to one, how a play here or there is going to impact a series. Honestly, I think the Red Sox were playing well at the right time given the way they went through the postseason. I mean, they beat a really good Houston team and won three games at their place against a really good Houston club. It speaks volumes about the way they were playing. You can beat yourself up as much as you want, but you've got to play well to win a World Series, and they just played better."

When the World Series ended, Roberts said he wanted to make sure to go around and talk to his players.

"It was just letting them know what I told them after we lost Game 7 to Houston [in 2017], that even though we didn't accomplish our goal, it wasn't a lost season," said Roberts. "There are a lot of things we can be proud of. Considering how we started and where we were in September, there's a lot to be said for the character of the room."

"We did miss Seager, but I thought Manny [Machado] had a good postseason. But the great thing about our guys is that we didn't make excuses all year."

Roberts's contract status has been a source of significant publicity in the Los Angeles area. The Dodgers and Roberts have tried to work out a long-term extension, but the team merely picked up its option for 2019, with the promise that negotiations would continue. Any manager who has led a team to two straight World Series — and lost to two extraordinary teams, the 2017 Astros and 2018 Red Sox — shouldn't have to worry about his job status. But the Dodgers' front office has put Roberts in that spot.

"We know it's going to get done," Roberts insisted. "There are other things we need to take care of. Right now we're backfilling our staff. Ultimately, we believe it's going to happen."

As for his wine, "we scored a 95 on our '15 Cab," said Roberts. Not bad.

Apropos of nothing

1. It's not every offseason that there's a decent market for catching, both in free agency and possible trades, but this appears to be one of those times. And it looks as if teams are finding the trade candidates more attractive than the free agents. The Nationals, as expected, added to their catching depth, which already included free agent Kurt Suzuki, who signed a two-year, \$10 million deal. The Nationals on Friday acquired Yan Gomes from the Indians after a few attempts to obtain J.T. Realmuto from the Marlins. Realmuto remains the prize, but the Marlins are asking for three top prospects. They aren't going to get it. In free agency, offensive-minded catchers Yasmani Grandal and Wilson Ramos are available, but Robinson Chirinos is gaining traction in the market because he's more of an all-around catcher. Teams are asking themselves if they want to devote big dollars to catchers who are below-average defenders. The remaining trade options are Pittsburgh's Francisco Cervelli and Toronto's Russell Martin. All of these players will likely be moved.

2. It's good to hear that there are a handful of managers who have asked their front offices to reinstate a physical advance scouting position. So many teams, including the Red Sox, have gone to video advance scouting, and it obviously worked for the Sox. But the managers feel they're missing out on intangibles that don't show up on video. The advance scout normally covers the team next on the schedule and gathers all sorts of information, not only the X's and O's but the lowdown on each player from discussions with coaches, media, etc. That information could be anything, including a hidden injury that could affect performance and how a player is pitched. Sometimes reinventing the wheel is good, but sometimes it's not. We'll see if organizations listen to their managers.

3. The Red Sox have yet to name a manager for Triple A Pawtucket. It appears the organization wants to promote from within. One name that appears to be prominent in discussions is Billy McMillon, who once managed Double A Portland and has been a roving instructor in the minor league system.

4. The Red Sox lost a valued executive this past week when Allard Baird accepted an executive vice president position with the Mets to head their scouting and player development for new president of baseball operations Brodie Van Wagenen. Baird, a former GM of the Royals, had mostly been Boston's AL adviser to Dave Dombrowski but had headed international scouting in the past, as well. Baird is well-respected in the game and should do a good job bringing together the scouting and analytical aspects of the Mets organization. Dombrowski didn't immediately think Baird's position would be filled, but rather absorbed by others in the organization. Dombrowski's inner circle now consists of Frank Wren, Tony La Russa, Eddie Romero, Brian O'Halloran, and Zack Scott.

5. The major league joint drug prevention and treatment program report for 2018 indicates there were 101 therapeutic use exemptions for attention deficit disorder (ADD) but only one positive test for amphetamines. This is amazing considering in the old days amphetamines were in a bowl for players as soon as they walked into the clubhouse. It was the performance enhancer of choice back then, and most players partook.

6. Yes, I believe George Steinbrenner should be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame by the veterans committee. Nobody devoted more resources to his team than Steinbrenner with the Yankees. Nobody. Think whatever you'd like about his bravado, but he truly loved to win.

Updates on nine

1. Nathan Eovaldi, RHP, free agent — A few weeks ago we listed nine teams that have interest in Eovaldi. A factor that makes some of those teams hesitate is the two Tommy John surgeries he's endured, as well as the extra use in the postseason, which sometimes affects pitchers the following season. Will Eovaldi be immune from this? Eovaldi pitched only 111 innings during the 2018 regular season with Tampa Bay and Boston, but 22½ innings for the Red Sox in the postseason. But no one can deny his youth (28), velocity (capable of hitting 101 miles per hour), and the fact that nothing seems to faze him.

2. Corey Kluber, RHP, Indians — Probably the most solid pitcher available, the 32-year-old Kluber is drawing considerable interest as the Indians attempt to make the best possible deal. The two-time Cy Young winner went 20-7 with a 2.89 ERA in 215 innings in 2018, the fifth straight season he's thrown 200-plus innings in an era where 200 innings is becoming rare. Kluber is scheduled to earn \$17 million in 2019, with team options for \$17.5 million in 2020 and \$18 million in 2021, a bargain for a pitcher of his accomplishments. Kluber, who resides in Winchester in the offseason, has been linked to the Yankees, Dodgers, Phillies, Braves, Athletics, and Giants, and there may be more. Imagine what Kluber could mean to that young Braves staff.

3. Noah Syndergaard, RHP, Mets — With the Mets on the verge of trading for Robinson Cano and closer Edwin Diaz, there's also talk of them dealing Syndergaard. The moves wouldn't seem to make sense, would they? On the one hand, it seems like you're going for it by making the Mariners deal, but then you'd be depleting your impressive starting rotation. "I think the reasoning is you only have so many resources and you should devote most of them to your positional players and then use your farm system to develop your pitching," said a National League executive. You can bet the Yankees have their eyes on this one and would be willing to deplete some of their strength in the farm system for Syndergaard. Watch out for the Astros and Braves here, as well.

4. Luis Rivera, third base coach, Blue Jays — The Jays did a smart thing and kept Rivera as their third base/infield coach with infield prospects Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Bo Bichette, and Cavan Biggio on the way. Rivera is widely considered one of the best infield coaches in the game, as well as a future managerial candidate.

5. Dallas Keuchel, LHP, free agent — Keuchel, according to our executive sources, will be the third-most popular pitcher on the free agent market behind Patrick Corbin and Eovaldi. Keuchel isn't a flame-thrower, but his stuff still works. Keuchel could be a target of teams such as the Brewers, Reds, Cardinals, and Rangers. The Braves, looking for a veteran leader, also have Keuchel high on their wish list.

6. Yasiel Puig, OF, Dodgers — The Dodgers are forever trying to deal Puig, and they will make more attempts this offseason. Puig seems to be maturing little by little and is less of a firecracker as he gets older. But the stigma attached to him is still there. It would take a team with a strong manager and support system to make it work.

7. Craig Kimbrel, RHP, free agent — ESPN's Buster Olney tweeted this past week that Kimbrel is seeking a six-year deal. Not sure who would give him that, unless it's a team such as Atlanta, which is trying to bring back popular players. Closers Aroldis Chapman and Kenley Jensen received five-year deals. Kimbrel has also been plagued by poor postseason performances, which likely will knock down his value. No contending team wants a closer who has trouble when it counts the most. Kimbrel did recover, but that image of his 2018 postseason is embedded. The Red Sox would like to re-sign him, but we doubt they'll offer a six-year deal.

8. Steven Wright, RHP, Red Sox — If the Red Sox lose out on Eovaldi, Wright becomes an even bigger factor next season. He's recovering from cartilage surgery on his restored right knee. It's been a tough haul for Wright, but there's hope now that once he recovers from this surgery he should be good to go for spring training. Wright prefers to start and that could still be in the cards if the Sox lose out on Eovaldi. Otherwise, he could be a valuable piece of the bullpen, as he was in September.

9. Matt Barnes, RHP, Red Sox — As Bill Chuck points out, Barnes has blown five of six save opportunities over the last two seasons, which may be a reason the Red Sox don't see him as a possible closer. On the other hand, he has been brilliant when coming into the game with men on base, last season allowing just 1 of 14 inherited runners to score, and just 4 of 32 over the last two seasons.