

Here are key FAQs about Indians' offseason

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- The sting of another early October exit will linger for a while, but the Indians' decision-makers must now turn their attention to next year.

This week, manager Terry Francona, along with president of baseball operations Chris Antonetti and general manager Mike Chernoff, have already held end-of-year meetings with Cleveland's players, coaches and staff. The goal is to gather input on this past season, make plans for the offseason months ahead and assess the direction to take for 2019.

"It's really important to separate the feelings from the process," Antonetti said. "The feelings hurt a lot. It's disappointment. It's frustration. It's a lot of things. But what we need to do and what we always do, is we always reflect back organizationally and think about, 'What were the things within our control and what can we do better?' We do that at the end of every season, and this season will be no different.

"It's already started, in fact. We've had exit interviews with players. We've got feedback from staff. And we'll do our own internal assessment, and we'll reach out to others and get those reflections back from it and try to learn from it. What are things that we can do better as an organization and improve upon for next year?"

With that in mind, here are some FAQs about the Tribe's offseason:

1. How many Cleveland players will be eligible for free agency this winter?

The Indians will have four high-profile free agents this winter in third baseman Josh Donaldson, left fielder Michael Brantley, lefty Andrew Miller and righty Cody Allen. Other players eligible for free agency include pitchers Oliver Perez and Josh Tomlin, outfielders Melky Cabrera, Lonnie Chisenhall and Rajai Davis, and utility man Adam Rosales.

2. Will the Indians extend a qualifying offer to any free agents?

Teams have the option of extending one-year qualifying offers (valued at \$17.9 million for 2019) to departing free agents prior to free agency. If the player accepts, that is his salary for the '19 season. If the player rejects the offer, the team can potentially net Draft pick compensation if he signs elsewhere. The player has 10 days to make the decision.

Since Donaldson was traded to the Indians by Toronto this past season, he is no longer eligible for a qualifying offer. The three cases Cleveland will have to weigh are Allen, Brantley and Miller. All three could be in line for multiyear contracts this winter. That said, Allen and Miller are coming off subpar seasons. None of the three are sure-fire bets to receive the offer, but Brantley might top the list.

3. Who will be eligible for arbitration this winter?

The Indians will have eight arbitration cases to sort through. The most prominent names on the list are starter Trevor Bauer and shortstop Francisco Lindor. There is a chance that Lindor challenges the first-year arbitration salary record (Kris Bryant, \$10.85 million). Other players eligible for arbitration include pitchers Cody Anderson, Nick Goody, Neil Ramirez and Danny Salazar, plus outfielders Brandon Barnes and Leonys Martin.

4. Do the Indians hold any contract options for 2019?

Yes, there are two. Cleveland has a \$9.75 million team option to retain starter Carlos Carrasco, whose fourth-place finish in American League Cy Young voting in 2017 increased the option's value by \$750,000. That one is a no-brainer to pick up. The Indians must also decide on a \$3 million team option (or \$250,000 buyout) for corner outfielder Brandon Guyer, whose past two seasons have been riddled with health issues.

5. How is the payroll shaping up in light of free agents leaving, arbitration and guaranteed contracts?

The Indians ended this past season with a franchise-record payroll north of \$140 million, and there is more than \$40 million coming off the 2018 books through departing free agents. That said, the arbitration cases (if everyone is tendered a contract) could account for more than \$30 million. Looking at the eight eligible players, that includes roughly a projected \$17 million in raises. Assuming Carrasco's option is exercised, the players locked in on guaranteed deals currently account for around \$90 million of the '19 payroll. That's roughly \$16 million in raises for those 10 contracts.

"The one thing we do know," Antonetti said, "is whatever payroll might be coming off the books with the free agents we may be losing, we're going to need just as much, if not more, to retain the guys through arbitration raises and increases in guaranteed contracts. We had a franchise-record payroll this year just to retain those guys that are under contract. It would be a payroll even above where we are right now even before we add anyone externally."

6. Who could the Indians trade to free up payroll for other moves?

The most obvious trade candidate is Jason Kipnis, who is set to earn \$14.7 million in '19 and once again has uncertainty surrounding his place on the field. Kipnis could play second base, or the Indians might consider him for center or left field, depending on other offseason moves. If Cleveland could find a team to take a flier on Salazar (sidelined all of 2018 due to arm troubles), he could be dealt, too. Last offseason, slugger Edwin Encarnacion's name also surfaced in trade rumors. That would be surprising, but with Yandy Diaz looking for an opportunity, at least exploring dealing one of Encarnacion or Yonder Alonso would make sense.

7. What are the main needs for the Indians this winter?

Cleveland has the ability to retain its entire rotation, which remains the backbone of the roster and the primary reason the team will return as favorites to win the AL Central again. With Allen and Miller potentially exiting, and given the bullpen issues that plagued the club all year, addressing the relief corps will be critical this offseason. The Indians also need to sort through the question marks that exist at each outfield spot. As things currently stand, there is no clear-cut starter for left, center or right field.

8. When and where are MLB's annual offseason meetings?

The General Managers Meetings are scheduled for Nov. 5-8 in Carlsbad, Calif. The Winter Meetings will follow from Dec. 9-13 in Las Vegas. The annual Rule 5 Draft will take place on the morning of Dec. 13.

Chang collects hit, starts at third in Fall League

Indians

Indians No. 6 prospect Yu Chang went 1-for-5 and logged his second start at third base for Glendale. Hard-throwing righty Dalbert Siri scuffled in relief, allowing three earned runs on three hits and a walk in one inning.

Should the Cleveland Indians fire Terry Francona and Carl Willis? Hey, Hoynsie

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com | Posted October 13, 2018 at 09:25 AM | Updated October 13, 2018 at 10:40 AM

You really want to fire the manager and pitching coach?

Hey, Hoynsie: The Indians need to fire manager Terry Francona and pitching coach Carl Willis. I don't think Willis did anything as pitching coach and Francona can't get his team to the next level. All he does is keep screwing with the lineup with his left-righty platoons. Melky Cabrera is a swith-hitter and should have been playing every day over Brandon Guyer in right field. -- Richard Crawford II.

Hey, Richard: I know it was disappointing getting swept in the ALDS by the Astros, but I think you're overreacting.

The Indians have had six straight winning seasons under Francona. They've been to the postseason four times, won a pennant, three division titles and been to Game 7 of the World Series. Yes, they've lost the last six straight postseason games, but if you don't get to the postseason, you have no chance to advance.

Willis, in his first season with the Tribe, saw the Indians post a 3.77 staff ERA, fourth lowest in the AL. The Indians had five pitchers win 10 or more games and four post 200 or more strikeouts. Four pitchers on the same team with 200 plus strikeouts has happened just once in MLB history and you got to watch it. The rotation led the big leagues with 76 wins for the second straight year.

The bullpen was a disaster, but Willis shouldn't take all the heat for that. Relievers Cody Allen and Andrew Miller were inconsistent all year. The Indians waited until July to make a big bullpen trade and they elected to fire bullpen coach Jason Bere in the offseason and replace him with Scott Atchison, making his big-league coaching debut.

Did PED rumor play a part in Jose Ramirez's slump?

Hey, Hoynsie: There were media reports during the season from the Dominican Republic that Jose Ramirez used performance enhancing drugs and was about to get suspended. He denied it, and that was that. However, his drop in production in August through the end of the postseason is similar to reports of players who have used steroids, stopped before coming to spring training, only to see production tail off in the latter part of the year. In the Indians' front office is this a don't ask/don't tell issue? Is it a concern that gets discussed? -- Glenn Topyln, Pittsfield, Mich.

Hey, Glenn: That rumor surfaced at the end of May on a blog in the Dominican Republic that had no connection to any news agency. When it came to light, the Indians immediately called MLB and were told there was no truth to the rumor.

Ramirez was hitting .291 (58-for-199) in 51 of the Indians' first 52 games this season when the rumor popped. Here's what he hit over the last four months of the season: .267 (24-for-90) with six homers and 12 RBI in June; .322 (29-for-90), 8, 25 in July; .245 (.23-for-94), 5, 16 in August and .185 (17-for-92) 2, 12 in September.

Ramirez has played four plus years in the big leagues. Here are his career numbers from June through September/October in the regular season: .299 (91-for-304), 12, 34 in June; .306 (96-for-314) 15, 56 in July; .271 (134-for-483), 14, 56 in August and .291 (40-for-481) in September/October.

The biggest statistical difference in Ramirez's 2018 season and his career numbers is in September/October. If a player did a cycle of steroids during the offseason, stopped at a certain points in the offseason in hopes that he wouldn't test positive in spring training, would it take that long to catch up to him? Or was this just a late-season slump?

I've been fooled too many times to say this or that player would never put an illegal substance in his body to perform better. But the amount of times MLB players are tested for PEDS during spring training and the regular season is high. MLB also conducts random offseason tests. Ramirez has never had a positive test and that isn't a rumor.

Did move to second base cause Jose Ramirez's slump?

Hey, Hoynsie: I think the reason the Tribe tanked in the postseason was the deal for Josh Donaldson. From the time it was rumored that he was coming to Cleveland, Jose Ramirez decided to "pout." He clearly tanked after being told that as an All-Star third baseman he would have to move to make room for an aging disgruntled player. I think Jason Kipnis was mad that he had to move to the outfield again. The team chemistry was ruined and the Tribe's season was done. -- Richard Warren.

Hey, Richard: Ramirez said he would do whatever the Indians asked after they acquired Donaldson. I don't think he was crazy about moving to second. Ditto for Kipnis about moving to center.

Regarding Ramirez's slump, it started on Aug. 14, long before the deal for Donaldson was made or even gained steam as a rumor.

Two things about the Donaldson deal: Ramirez didn't play that well at second and out of the three players involved in the move, Kipnis hit the best going down the stretch. Donaldson and Ramirez were non-factors in September and the ALDS.

Should Danny Salazar pitch out of the bullpen in 2019?

Hey, Hoynsie: With so many vacancies in the bullpen, I think the Indians should commit to having Danny Salazar in the bullpen, if he's able to return from shoulder surgery. A guy like Salazar is perfect as a set up man behind closer Brad Hand. He could be the Indians' Dellin Betances; it's a no brainer. -- David Bolger, Lakewood.

Hey, David: First things first, I think the Indians will be happy if Salazar spends the majority of the 2019 season pitching anywhere but in Goodyear, Ariz., where he spent all last year on a rehab assignment before undergoing right shoulder surgery.

He's scheduled to start a throwing program in November. Remember, you're talking about a pitcher who hasn't had a healthy season since 2015. If the Indians get anything out of Salazar in 2019, it will be a bonus.

What will Indians' uniforms look like in 2019 without Chief Wahoo?

Hey, Hoynsie: Now that Chief Wahoo has been retired by the team, are there are any rumors about possible uniform changes or a new logo? I believe I am in the minority, but I love the block C. -- Stephen Davis, Vermillion.

Hey, Stephen: It sounds like the details are still being worked on regarding the Tribe's uniforms for 2019, but equipment manager Tony Amato said the club will wear Block C caps next year. What logo will be worn on the sleeve of the uniforms is still being discussed.

Just a guess, but it could have something to do with the Tribe hosting the 2019 All-Star Game?

Why isn't there more fire and fury coming out of the Tribe's front office?

Hey, Hoynsie: Is there any real passion with this team and management? I heard a very calm and collected press conference. No anger whatsoever. I would like to hear owner Paul Dolan proclaim the last two years' playoffs were a catastrophic failure which will not be tolerated next season. So some anger and fire would be appreciated. Did the Cleveland hitters intensely study the Houston pitchers in order to find trends/weaknesses? Highly doubtful. -- Bob Sission, Asheville, N.C.

Hey, Bob: I'm not sure what postseason press conference you were listening to, but things got a little tense in the one I sat in on.

You want fire and fury, turn on a cable news network and listen to Donald Trump. For the most part that's not this organization's style. The Indians have a lot of problems to address this winter and they usually approach that by removing the emotion of the moment, while trying to be as efficient as possible.

As for how much the Indians studied their scouting reports, I don't know. I wasn't in the meetings, but sometimes the other team is just better.

Should the Indians bring back Mickey Callaway as pitching coach?

Hey, Hoynsie: No one has brought up the point that the relief pitching, maybe all the pitching, suffered due to the loss of pitching coach Mickey Callaway. Do you think this is a valid point? Carl Willis has been let go by a number of teams and I never heard any of the pitchers give him credit for any advice. Did this have an effect on the pitching chemistry? Can we bring Callaway back after the Mets' losing season? -- Kathy Vecchio, Seven Hills.

Hey, Kathy: I don't think that was the case at all. Callaway did a great job with the Indians, but Willis had a good first year.

The pitching coach on most teams deals mainly with the starting rotation. There was nothing wrong with the Tribe's starters this year. In fact, they were excellent.

Callaway left the Indians because he wanted to manage. The Mets hired him and gave him a three-year deal. As bad as they were this year, he's expected to be back in 2019.

What is the pecking order of the Tribe's pitching prospects?

Hey, Hoynsie: What is the pecking order in regards to pitching prospects on the farm now? Who are the top three guys and what is the timeline for them to make the big club? -- AZCardman, Gilbert, Ariz.

Hey, AZCardman: Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so you can rank them, but here are some of the Tribe's top pitching prospects: Triston McKenzie, Ethan Hankins, Sam Hentges, Lenny Torres, Luis Oviedo, Elijah Morgan and Aaron Civale.

Last winter the Indians felt Shane Bieber was major league ready. Not sure if there's a prospect they feel that strongly about this time around. Do the Indians have a sport psychologist on staff?

Hey, Hoynsie: Does the Tribe employ a sports psychologist? I believe the Brewers and Red Sox do, and they won their Division Series quite confidently. -- Tom Reid, Oberlin.

Hey, Tom: Dr. Charles Maher just finished his 23rd year as the Indians' sport and performance psychologist. He is the director of the team's personal and organizational performance.

The Indians have three performance coaches under Maher's direction in Ceci Clark, Brian Milers and Oscar Gutierrez Ramirez.

Home run chase might have doomed Indians' Jose Ramirez

By Jeff Schudel JSchudel@News-Herald.com @JSProlinsider on Twitter 21 hrs ago Comments

The disappearance of Jose Ramirez over the last six weeks of the regular season and into the ALDS will remain the unsolved mystery of the Indians 2018 season.

How can a player, as consistently good as Ramirez was in 2016, 2017 and the first 4 ½ months of 2018, become clueless at home plate?

“He got himself into a predicament and he couldn’t get himself out of it,” Indians manager Terry Francona said at the wrap-up news conference, flanked by team president Chris Antonetti and general manager Mike Chernoff. “It’s hard to figure out because a guy can be that good, that dominant and then he just couldn’t get ... he kept peeling off balls even when he got pitches to hit, he kind of peeled off and he knew it and he watched video and he just couldn’t get the feeling of staying through the ball.”

Ramirez was in the thick of a home run race with Khris Davis (48) of the Oakland A’s, J.D. Martinez (43) of the Boston Red Sox, Mike Trout (39) of the Los Angeles Angels and Joey Gallo (40) of the Texas Rangers when his numbers began to slide. He hit his 37th home run Aug. 17 and did not hit another until Sept. 12. He didn’t hit his last home run until Sept. 29.

Davis hit 13 home runs after Aug. 17 to win the race easily. Martinez homered on Aug. 17 and hit five more after that. Gallo hit homered eight times and Trout nine times after Aug. 17.

Ramirez hit .171 over the last 30 games of the regular season. He was 0-for-11 in the three-game ALDS sweep by the Houston Astros after going 2-for-20 in the five-game ALDS loss to the Yankees last year. That makes him 2-for-31 (.065) in his last eight postseason games.

Antonetti and Francona do not expect Ramirez’ struggles to carry into next season. Antonetti said a hitter going through a slump is not unusual. Ramirez, unfortunately for the Indians, slumped at the worst time possible.

“Think back to 2017, the beginning of the season with Corey Kluber,” Antonetti said. “Were people saying, ‘Oh my God, what’s wrong with the pitching coach?’ We went through a month and a half where I think his ERA was over five and he went on to win the Cy Young.

“Jose struggled for a similar amount of time, just at a different point in the season. But when you look at the body of work, he’s going to finish in the top-five in the MVP voting. So yeah, did he go through unfortunate timing with when he struggled? Of course, and he worked really hard to get out of it, he just wasn’t able to by the end of the season.”

Ramirez hit .270 in 2018 after batting .312 in 2016 and .318 in 2017. He hit 39 home runs in 2018, 10 more than in any previous season.

• Here are the injury updates on ailing Indians:

Center fielder Bradley Zimmer, who had shoulder surgery in July, is rehabbing in Arizona, Indians president Chris Antonetti said. Zimmer will begin throwing next month and start a hitting progression in December.

“Too early to say a precise timeline, but we do expect him to be able to play for the majority of next year,” Antonetti said. “Exactly when that will be will be determined by how he reaches each of those checkpoints, but he’s still on track.”

Pitcher Danny Salazar will resume throwing next month. He had shoulder surgery in July.

Pitcher Cody Anderson is recovering from Tommy John surgery in March. The Indians expect him to be full-go by spring training.

Pitcher Nick Goody had elbow surgery in late August. He is “a few weeks” from starting any kind of throwing, Antonetti said.

So the Cleveland Indians got swept in the ALDS because of analytics -- really? Tribe Take

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com phoynes@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio - It’s been five days since the Indians were swept in the ALDS by Houston. It is still shocking that that one team beat another team so thoroughly on the postseason stage.

Jason Kipnis said the Indians were not only out-played, but out-scouted and out-coached to a certain degree. Mike Clevinger, who threw five good innings in Game 3, when asked what happened told reporters, “A lot of stuff. A lot of things. I’m going to keep it really short. We were a little bit, kind of had our backs against the wall before this started when it came to the analytical side. But everybody was out there giving it their all. They just had some really good arms to back it up.”

Scouting and analytics beat the Indians? That’s why they were outscored, 21-6?

Some numbers to consider.

*The Indians, who led the AL in stolen bases during the regular season, didn’t steal one base in the ALDS. The main reason being they had only 19 baserunners in three games, while the Astros had 50.

*In Game 3, an 11-3 loss, the Indians made three errors, threw two wild pitches, walked eight batters and committed a balk.

*Indians’ pitchers made four errors over 162 games in the regular season. They made three in Game 3 - one by Clevinger and two by Trevor Bauer. Bauer made both his errors in seventh inning when Houston scored twice to 3-2 lead on the way to a 11-3 romp.

*The Indians went 0-for-6 with runners in scoring position for the series. The Astros went 11-for-30.

The Indians have been at the forefront of baseball's analytical movement for years. They created their own computer system to scout and evaluate players. Executives John Hart, Dan O'Dowd, Mark Shapiro, Chris Antonetti, Mike Chernoff and many more have worked hard over the years to blend analytics with traditional scouting in terms of using analysis and logic in evaluating players and building a roster.

For players to imply that they were beaten because Houston's analytical brainiacs were smarter than the Indians' brainiacs is an excuse. And a lame one at that.

What I saw in the ALDS was one team beat the other team up one side and down the other. How did analytics play a part in Bauer making two critical errors in Game 3? The day before Game 1, Justin Verlander told reporters he'd changed his pitching style since being traded to Astros in August of 2017. He said he started throwing harder, concentrating on his four-seam fastball. The next day he went out and threw 95 mph to 97 mph four-seam fastballs past the Indians for five plus innings.

That has nothing to do with analytics and everything to do with just getting flat-out beat. This Indians' team had a stuck-in-neutral vibe all year. The transmission finally blew out in the ALDS.

Indians, Jose Ramirez couldn't fix issues but whole body of work must be considered

By Ryan Lewis Beacon Journal/Ohio.com

CLEVELAND — There were numerous issues for the Indians after their three-game sweep at the hands of the Houston Astros in the American League Division Series.

Corey Kluber and Andrew Miller were both knocked around. Trevor Bauer committed two errors in one inning in Game 3. Nobody in the lineup outside of Francisco Lindor did much of anything offensively.

But one of the most glaring aspects in the sweep was Jose Ramirez's silence at the plate for the second October in a row.

Ramirez was a nonfactor in the ALDS, going 0-for-11 with three strikeouts. A year ago, he turned in a 2-for-20 performance against the New York Yankees. Two postseason series since the end of 2016, and Ramirez has twice as many strikeouts (10) than times on base, and he hasn't logged a postseason extra-base hit since Game 5 of the 2016 World Series.

"We want to be successful. We want to be successful, but I fell off," Ramirez said in the clubhouse after Game 3. "That's all I can say. I didn't perform to how I wanted to, but these are things that happen in baseball. These are just things that happen in baseball. All I can do is look forward to the offseason, and work in the offseason to get better."

This season's case isn't that simple, and the fact that Ramirez has struggled in two consecutive postseasons might not be the entire story. It's not as if Ramirez was red hot going into the postseason and then turned ice cold. He had been struggling for more than a month.

From Aug. 19 on, he hit just .167. He entered August with 32 home runs but added just seven more the rest of the way and finished with 39. Ramirez could still be an MVP finalist, as he turned in one of the best seasons for an Indians hitter in quite some time, and he should finish in the top five in the American League. But that slow finish likely cost him a chance to win it.

The Indians tried to correct his course leading into the postseason. They tried to find the right adjustment for his slump. Ramirez just couldn't escape its grip in time.

"He got himself into a predicament and he couldn't get himself out of it," manager Terry Francona said. "It's hard to figure out because a guy can be that good, that dominant and then he just couldn't get — he kept peeling off balls even when he got pitches to hit. He kind of peeled off and he knew it and he watched video and he just couldn't get the feeling of staying through the ball."

Ramirez has established himself as one of the best hitters in baseball, and his team-friendly contract is one of the most valuable in the game. He hit .270 with a .387 on-base percentage, 39 home runs, 38 doubles, 105 RBI and 34 stolen bases. But he hit a slump, like many hitters do. His happened to come at the worst possible time.

"I think a big part of this just comes down to timing," president of baseball operations Chris Antonetti said. "Think back to 2017, the beginning of the season with Corey Kluber. Were people saying, 'Oh my God, what's wrong with the pitching coach?' We went through a month and a half where I think his ERA was over 5 and he went on to win the Cy Young."

"Jose struggled for a similar amount of time, just at a different point in the season. But when you look at the body of work, he's going to finish in the top five in the MVP. So, yeah, did he go through unfortunate timing with when he struggled? Of course, and he worked really hard to get out of it. He just wasn't able to by the end of the season."

In a news conference with reporters on Wednesday, Francona defended the club's hitting coaches, pointing out that if they are to be held responsible for Ramirez's month-and-a-half slump, then they also must get some credit for Ramirez turning into one of the elite hitters in the game.

"I think it's every bit as much of a reflection that a kid that we thought might be a utility player is going to be second or third or fourth in the league in MVP voting," Francona said. "I think [hitting coach Ty Van Burkleo] is every bit as much to put the onus on for that also."

The fact that Ramirez had been slumping doesn't necessarily lessen the need the Indians have that he remain a weapon in the heart of their lineup when it matters most. The Indians might have a tough offseason ahead, and when these games roll around again, Ramirez, Lindor and

the stars the Indians can keep in Cleveland will have to excel for them to get to where they want to go. It's difficult to imagine the Indians climbing to that summit without them.
In this case, Ramirez wasn't alone. The Indians as a team hit just .144. They never got going, save for a couple of solo home runs by Lindor.

"I would say that [Gerrit] Cole and [Justin] Verlander had something to do with that," Francona said.

Teams calling

Indians general manager Mike Chernoff is rumored to be on the list of candidates the New York Mets would like to interview to head their baseball operations, according to a report by SportsNet New York.

According to the report, it's not yet known if Chernoff would even want to interview for the position, only stating that his name is on the Mets' initial list of hopeful candidates.

Chernoff just finished his 15th season with the Indians and his third with the title of general manager. Last year, Mickey Callaway left the Indians to become the Mets' manager.

Nick Cafardo / After an early exit, Yankees have work to do in the offseason

By Nick CafardoGlobe Staff

The Yankees were eliminated in the Division Series, but that doesn't mean they won't be a thorn in the Red Sox' side for many years to come. The Yankees, however, have some work to do in the offseason. Like Boston last offseason, they will have money to spend because they reset their luxury tax by falling under the \$197 million payroll threshold this season.

Yankees general manager Brian Cashman has some shopping to do, but how much shopping can he do?

Cashman said the decision on the amount of payroll will be made by owner Hal Steinbrenner. "He'll set the dance tune, and we'll dance to it," said Cashman.

First and foremost, the Yankees need a starting pitcher or two. The "two" part will depend on how comfortable Cashman and his staff feel about rookie Justus Sheffield taking a role as a fifth starter. We know that Luis Severino and Masahiro Tanaka will be around. J.A. Happ and CC Sabathia are free agents.

Cashman indicated at his news conference on Friday at Yankee Stadium that he will seek to deal Sonny Gray, likely to a smaller-market team where he can handle the stage better.

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"It hasn't worked out thus far but I think he's extremely talented," said Cashman. "I think we'll enter the winter opened-minded about moving him. If we can't get what we feel is fair value he'll be with us and we'll keep trying. There have been a lot of cases where pitchers just don't react in certain markets before, and after they're fine. "

So that leaves some work to be done.

Happ, 36, could re-sign with the Yankees, who could also delve into free agency and sign someone such as Arizona free agent lefthander Patrick Corbin, who is only 29. It would appear the Yankees are moving on from Sabathia, who says he wants to play for at least another season and not necessarily in New York. The Yankees could also reacquaint themselves with Nathan Eovaldi, who will be a free agent. Obviously, the Red Sox would like to re-sign him, but it appears Eovaldi has won himself a nice four-year deal at about \$15 million per year, at least.

Connecticut native Charlie Morton will also be a free agent. At age 35, the Astros righthander could be a short-term solution to the middle of the Yankee rotation. Morton would also fit the Red Sox rotation after they shed free agent DrewPomeranz's almost \$10 million salary.

There's also the trade market, and one attractive lefthander would be Madison Bumgarner, who was on the block a bit at the trading deadline. The Yankees had some interest at the time. Of course, with the Giants not yet hiring a new general manager, it's hard to tell where there'll go with this.

Suffice it to say the major work has to be done to the starting rotation, but the Yankees also need to look at the bullpen, where Zach Britton and David Robertson are free agents. Letting them walk would break up that gang of closers who are working as middle relievers and setup men. The Yankees could easily afford to sign one or both if they feel they can still help augment Dellin Betances and Aroldis Chapman.

There are also other attractive bullpen choices such as Kelvin Herrera, Andrew Miller (though he was hurt a lot this year), and Greg Holland (who pitched lousy for the Cardinals and very well for the Nationals).

The potential elephant in the room is Manny Machado. It's no secret that Machado would love to play for the Yankees. Now that it's been disclosed that Didi Gregorius needs Tommy John surgery as a result of injuring his elbow in Game 1 or 2 of the ALDS against Boston, it paves the way for Machado to come to New York as the shortstop.

Otherwise, Gleyber Torres would shift from second to shortstop. If Machado signed with the Yankees to play third, that would necessitate Miguel Andujar moving to first base. All speculative, of course.

As Andujar and Torres continue to grow as major league players following their rookie seasons, this could potentially be a devastating infield for the Yankees. Machado would give the Yankees a better overall pure hitter to augment the sluggers already in their lineup.

"We haven't even had our organization meetings yet, so everything is premature," Cashman said. "We really have to sit down as a group and go over our options."

When you think about it, despite some of their prominent free agents, the Yankees have their major players under control for a longer period than do the Red Sox. Aaron Judge can't be a free agent until 2023, Andujar and Torres not until 2024. Giancarlo Stanton is signed through

2027. Gary Sanchez is theirs until 2023. Gregorius is signed until 2020. Aaron Hicks can also be a free agent in 2020. Severino can't be a free agent until 2023, and Tanaka can be a free agent in 2021. Betances could leave in 2020 and Chapman in 2022.

The Yankees were disappointed they didn't even get as far as last season, when they took the Astros to Game 7 of the ALCS before losing. Manager Joe Girardi was fired after that, even though he took a very young team a lot further than most people around the game thought he would. They brought in Aaron Boone, who wound up winning 14 more regular-season games but bowed out in four games in the ALDS. So that essentially was a step backward, making it hard to justify the Girardi firing.

The Yankees also will likely part with veteran Brett Gardner, 35, whose \$12.5 million option likely won't be picked up, especially with Jacoby Ellsbury likely to come back next season from hip surgery. They may want to re-sign Andrew McCutchen for a short-term deal. McCutchen may want something more significant, though it's uncertain he would get it with his overall game not what it used to be.

There's certainly angst among Yankees fans over the quick departure from the postseason. Their fan base thought that they would build off last season and with a superstar lineup advance to a World Series berth. But they fell far short of that.

"Of course we're disappointed," Cashman said. "I thought we had a chance against the Red Sox, but they're a great team. We knew that all season facing them. They did a great job against us."

Apropos of nothing

1. Interviews are going fast and furious around the league for the vacant GM jobs in San Francisco, New York (Mets), and Baltimore. Several names have emerged with the Mets, with Cardinals executive Gary LaRocque getting the most play. But the Mets have interviewed younger candidates such as Tampa Bay's Chaim Bloom and Cleveland's Mike Chernoff, while veterans such as Doug Melvin have also had their day — reflective perhaps of a tug of war between Fred Wilpon and his son Jeff over the type of GM to lead the team. Do the Mets go the new-age route, or opt for old-school?

2. You just wonder what's going on in Miami. Gary Denbo, the man empowered by Derek Jeter, has wielded the ax liberally, letting go of probably the best infield instructor in recent memory in Perry Hill, while also firing one of the brightest young scouting directors in Jim Cuthbert. People in baseball are just mystified by Denbo's actions. Morale in that organization, I'm told, is at an all-time low. Jeter has gotten off to a poor start as the man running the show in Miami with a lot of strange decisions, including the firings of a lot of good people and the empowering of Denbo. We understand, from a financial perspective, the trading of superstars they couldn't afford, but the rest of it has made no sense. As one staffer said, "It's been ruthless. Just ruthless."

3. Dan Duquette had yet to receive an inquiry regarding any of the available GM jobs, but there's a possibility the Mets and Giants could circle back to him.

4. A two-man team will emerge for the Giants with the hiring of a president of baseball operations and GM. Brian Sabean would still remain in an advisory capacity in that setup. With Ben Cherington out of the picture by his own doing, the Giants are looking into the analytics-oriented GMs, and may split the difference with a traditional veteran president to oversee it all. Dodgers executive Josh Byrnes, a former Red Sox assistant GM, has also emerged as a viable candidate.

5. Umpire Angel Hernandez was ridiculed quite a bit for his work in the ALDS, especially by the Yankees' CC Sabathia, who said Hernandez should not be working a postseason game. One defender of Hernandez was Rick Porcello, who found no fault with his ball-and-strike calls. "Throw the ball over the plate, CC," Porcello said afterward. "I thought Angel Hernandez called a good game. You've got to put the ball over the white part of the plate and then you get the strikes called."

6. It's a shame what happened in Detroit with longtime broadcast partners Mario Impemba and Rod Allen, who fought after a broadcast of a Sept. 4 game as part of a dispute that stemmed from who got the better chair in the booth, among other trivial things. A fabulously written tick-tock by Detroit News baseball writer Lynn Henning detailed the often-felt tension between the two, even though they'd been together for 16 seasons on Fox Sports Detroit.

7. In their first 30 years after moving from Brooklyn to Los Angeles (1958-88), the Dodgers won five championships. They haven't won one in the 30 years since.

Updates on nine

1. Eddie Romero, assistant GM, Red Sox — As the Red Sox' success story grows, Romero's stock is rising in major league baseball. Romero is not only working under the well-respected Dave Dombrowski, he also embraces the new-wave information and is an expert in the international market, which is very important for a GM in this era. Romero, the son of former Red Sox utilityman Ed Romero, has been around baseball his entire life.

2. Ned Colletti, former GM, Dodgers — He could be in line for a front office post in Baltimore or San Francisco. Although he fits the profile of a traditional front-office man, Colletti embraced analytics during his Dodgers tenure. He knows how to run an organization and has always created a nice balance of scouting and analytics.

3. Brad Ziegler, former pitcher — Ziegler retired this past week, ending an 11-year career in which he led all relievers in innings since his rookie season in 2008. Ziegler's submarine style confounded many a righthanded batter. He was effective in his half-season in Boston (1.52 ERA). From 2008-16, Ziegler had a 2.44 ERA. He struggled at the start of this season for the Marlins, but turned it around. Ziegler could pursue TV or front-office jobs.

4. Gary DiSarcina, bench coach, Mets — The Plymouth resident is on the list of 40 compiled by Rangers GM Jon Daniels for their manager's job. DiSarcina served as John Farrell's bench coach and has experience under Mike Scioscia as a bench coach with the Angels, as well. Red Sox players enjoyed working with DiSarcina, who is also a terrific infield instructor. The Rangers were also interviewing former Yankees manager Joe Girardi.

5. Omar Minaya, special assistant to president, Mets — Minaya will have a lot to say about who becomes the next GM. Minaya, in fact, will have his role grow rather than diminish, so whoever comes in as the GM will have to coexist with him. The Mets also have holdovers J.P. Ricciardi, who has two years remaining on his contract, and John Ricco, who has been a loyal administrator in charge of contracts. Whoever agrees to take the job also has to be able to deal with Jeff Wilpon, who is very much involved in baseball matters as the son of the owner.

6. Mickey Callaway, manager, Mets — He is in an interesting position because the new Mets GM will supposedly have the power to keep or fire the manager. Callaway did not have a successful first year with the Mets, as his team was beset with injuries. He would have been high on the Twins' list if he were available. Chief baseball officer Derek Falvey worked in the Indians' front office at the same time Callaway was there in a coaching capacity. Still, there could very well be an Indians slant to the Twins' hire. Sandy Alomar Jr. and Brad Mills are two Indians coaches who could be in the running in Minnesota. Connecting even more dots, Twins GM Thad Levine was involved in the hiring of Jeff Banister as manager of the Rangers. Banister was fired in September.

7. Mike Scioscia, former manager, Angels — His friends have said that he still wants to manage after 19 years with the Angels, and that he would entertain opportunities if they come his way. So far, Texas, Baltimore, and Toronto, with managerial openings, have not indicated any interest, but it's still relatively early in the process.

8. Jacoby Ellsbury, CF, Yankees — According to GM Brian Cashman, Ellsbury should be ready to go by late March or April from hip surgery, which kept him out all season. Ellsbury has now had two years in his career where he's missed all or most of the season — 2010, when he cracked six ribs and was limited to 18 games, and this season with numerous injuries, the most serious of which was the hip. Ellsbury is 35 years old and is still owed about another \$47.2 million, which includes a \$5 million buyout option in 2021.

9. Dan Evans, former GM, Dodgers — He rebuilt the fading Dodgers when he took over as GM in 2001, until his departure after 2004. Evans led the Dodgers to their first playoff appearance in eight years in 2004. He has since worked as an agent and a scout and/or executive for the White Sox, Cubs, Mariners, and lastly the Blue Jays. He had a .546 winning percentage as the Dodgers' GM. Evans has shown interest in both the Baltimore and San Francisco GM jobs.