

Inbox: Does it make sense to trade Kluber?

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

Does it make sense to trade Corey Kluber? He racks up a lot of regular-season wins, but given his past two postseasons, does he make sense for the Indians? Could Cleveland win the division without him and get a proven outfield bat and solid reliever via trade?

--Adam S.

At the bare minimum, I do think it makes sense to listen to what type of offers might be out there for Kluber or perhaps Carlos Carrasco. But I don't think Cleveland should consider trading Kluber based on any of the reasons you outlined in your question. Let's start there.

True, Kluber has a 10.20 ERA in his past four playoff outings. That said, I don't think it's really fair to clump all of those starts together. What happened in 2016 has nothing to do with what happened a year later, and it certainly isn't linked to what took place another year after that. Let's not forget that Kluber spun a 0.89 ERA in five postseason starts in leading the depleted Indians rotation to Game 7 of the World Series in '16.

In Kluber's Game 7 outing against the Cubs in the 2016 Fall Classic, the ace had shouldered all he could for a month and fatigue finally caught up with him. In the '17 American League Division Series, Kluber was battling an unspecified physical ailment and tried to pitch through it. In this year's ALDS against the Astros? Well, that just looked like a clunker. If there was a health issue, no one will say so.

Now that we've got that out of the way, back to the idea of exploring a trade.

This offseason, the Indians have a list of needs, with outfield help and bullpen reinforcements at the top. Cleveland's rotation is an area of depth and strength, so it makes complete sense to explore what teams may offer for arms like Kluber (signed through '19 with club options for '20 and '21) or Carrasco (club options for '19 and '20). It would potentially be a way to acquire controllable assets, while freeing up some payroll.

Kluber, specifically, will see his salary in 2019 bump up to \$17 million if -- in reality, when -- he finishes in the top 10 in voting for this year's AL Cy Young Award. That would also increase the value of his team options to \$17.5 million for '20 and \$18 million for '21.

The danger in this strategy rests in the lack of depth behind the Tribe rotation's front five, and that is why I do not think Cleveland will trade any of Kluber, Carrasco, Trevor Bauer, Mike Clevinger or Shane Bieber this winter. Adam Plutko is currently the sixth starter. Behind him are Cody Anderson (returning from Tommy John surgery on his right elbow) and Danny Salazar (did not pitch in '18 due to a right shoulder injury). Top prospect Triston McKenzie will be on the radar in the near future, but it seems like 2020 is more realistic for his arrival.

As Tribe fan of over 50 years, my main question all year was: Why don't we hear much about the Tribe's record against above-.500 squads? I believe we were almost 10 games under .500 vs. those teams. It seemed to me that was the clearest predictor of a likely tough slog in the postseason.

--Pete L., Boca Raton, Fla.

The Indians had a .426 winning percentage against teams with a .500 record or better, which was actually above the MLB average (.399). Better than pure win-loss record is a stat called tOPS+, which shows performance in a split relative to overall production. Cleveland's pitchers had an MLB-worst 121 tOPS+ and the Tribe's hitters had an MLB-worst 80 tOPS+ against above-.500 teams. Simply put, when facing teams with a .500 record or better, Indians pitchers were 21 percent worse than usual and Indians hitters were 20 percent worse than usual.

Now, does that have anything to do with Cleveland's quick October exit? There are differing opinions on that subject. First off, a team can only play its schedule. But did so many games against a mostly-rebuilding AL Central hurt the Indians' readiness for a playoff series? Maybe, maybe not. Count Bauer among those who think it had some sort of impact.

"I do think our division hurt us a little bit, given that we weren't pressed all year," Bauer said in an interview with MLB.com last week. "We never went through the fire to figure out when we face adversity, what's our response as a team? How much fire do we have and where are we really at? But that's not an excuse.

"That's just to say we need to be better as players and as a leadership group on the team -- the guys that have been there a long time -- at holding people accountable to that level of intensity, that level of play, that level of energy throughout the whole season. So that's something that we're going to get better at."

While I do think the Indians will be open to the idea of trading Alonso (under contract for \$8 million in '19 with a \$9 million team option for '20), the more likely scenario is that Diaz gets his chance at third base. At the season-end sit-down with reporters, manager Terry Francona emphasized that Cleveland needs to give Diaz a shot. The most natural way to do that would be to have him play third and keep Jose Ramirez at second. If Michael Brantley is not re-signed, Jason Kipnis would then become an option for left field.

Now that former Indians catching prospect Francisco Mejia is now wearing a Padres uniform, I think Cleveland will continue to lean on both Gomes and Roberto Perez in '19. Eric Haase got a taste of the big leagues last year, but he does not yet have the same rapport that Gomes and Perez have built up with the veteran pitchers. On a team built to win now, the emphasis is on defense behind the plate and guiding the staff. In that way, it makes sense to stick with the tandem of Gomes and Perez, especially to have built-in safety net for injuries.

I think the odds of Lonnie Chisenhall being re-signed by the Indians are slim to none. Tyler Naquin offers a similar skill-set and does so at a much lower pricetag for now. Naquin has played center field, but profiles better as a right fielder and -- last season's struggles and health issues aside -- has a decent career track record against righty pitching.

Siri notches scoreless save in Fall League

Here's a team-by-team breakdown of how prospects fared in Arizona Fall League action on Saturday:

Indians (Glendale)

Dalbert Siri notched his first save of the fall, tossing a scoreless ninth inning for Glendale. He allowed one hit and one walk and struck out a batter. Southpaw Rob Kaminsky earned the win with two scoreless innings of relief (one hit, one walk, two strikeouts), and No. 6 prospect Yu Chang (1-for-4) contributed at the plate with an RBI single. Designated hitter Li-Jen Chu went 0-for-3 with a run and a strikeout.

Ramirez, Lindor among Gold Glove finalists

By Matt Kelly MLB.com @mattkellyMLB

Rawlings announced the American and National League finalists for the 2018 Gold Glove Awards on Thursday, spelling out many of the game's premier defenders.

Plenty of mainstays are joined by exciting newcomers in this year's field for the Gold Glove, which is determined by a combination of votes submitted by Major League managers and coaches and a sabermetric index provided by Society for American Baseball Research (SABR). Eighteen Gold Gloves are given out each year (one for each position in each league), along with the Platinum Glove, which is given out to the game's best overall defender as voted by the fans.

Looking at Indians' in-house options in center

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- The Indians entered the offseason with question marks hovering over all three outfield positions. The options in center field, in particular, currently include a long list of internal names, but it is hard to predict who will patrol that part of the outfield grass come Opening Day.

"That's an area that we will have to spend a lot of time addressing," said Chris Antonetti, the Indians' president of baseball operations. "Some of it depends on how we align our returning players. Also, obviously, it will be impacted by substantial departures."

Cleveland has opened each of the past five seasons with a different player in center field on Opening Day. There is a chance that streak will reach six in 2019. With that in mind, here is a look at six of the Tribe's in-house options for center field.

Jason Kipnis

Contract status: After earning \$13.7 million last season, Kipnis is due to earn \$14.7 million in 2019, which is the last guaranteed year in his six-year contract. His deal includes a \$16.5 million team option (or \$2.5 million buyout) for '20.

2018 recap: Kipnis, 31, hit .230 with 18 homers, 28 doubles, 75 RBIs and a .704 OPS in 147 games, marking his second consecutive subpar offensive campaign. Over the last two years combined, Kipnis has an 86 OPS+, meaning he has been 14 percent below league average offensively. He had a 114 OPS+ in the '15-16 seasons combined. That said, Kipnis did hit .295/.361/.589 (.951 OPS) over his last 28 games in '18. After opening the year at second base, Kipnis finished the season as the Tribe's center fielder.

2019 outlook: If Cleveland is unable to trade Kipnis -- a move that could help the team's bottom line as it tries to address other needs -- then he could move back to second or stay in the outfield. The most likely scenario is the outfield, allowing the Tribe to give Yandy Diaz the keys to third base. Jose Ramirez would remain at second in that scenario. If outfielder Michael Brantley departs via free agency, Kipnis could take over in left field.

He said it: "We know he can play second. We know he can play center. My guess is he could hand left field just fine. But, we would need to see where we're at and what our needs are." -- Indians manager Terry Francona

Leonys Martin

Contract status: Martin earned \$1.75 million on a one-year contract in '18, but the outfielder has one year left of arbitration eligibility. That means Martin will be due for a raise in his final season of contractual control.

2018 recap: Overall, Martin hit .255/.323/.425 in 84 games with the Tigers and Indians, though his stint with Cleveland consisted of only six games. After being acquired from Detroit prior to the July 31 non-waiver Trade Deadline, Martin developed a serious bacterial infection that ended his season in August. When healthy, he played well in center (three Defensive Runs Saved and 15.3 UZR/150 in 678 1/3 innings) and hit .279/.348/.451 against right-handed pitching.

2019 outlook: Depending on which way Cleveland plans on going with its outfield -- especially as it weighs the financial situation -- Martin could be a non-tender candidate. Part of the reason Martin was an attractive trade acquisition, though, was that extra season of control. If Martin's offseason recovery continues to go well and he is retained, he would be a natural fit to handle righty pitching in center.

He said it: "As a starting point, we expect him to be back at full health next year. Exactly where that fits in, we'll have to work through that. He's arbitration eligible again this season for the last time. We'll have to just make an assessment of how that fits within the construct of the rest of our team." -- Antonetti

Greg Allen

Contract status: Allen is not eligible for arbitration until 2021 at the earliest and he has two Minor League options remaining.

2018 recap: Given the injuries and other issues that hit the Tribe's outfield, Allen appeared in 91 games. The fleet-footed rookie hit .257/.310/.343 with 16 extra-base hits, 21 steals and 36 runs scored. The advanced defensive metrics were not kind to Allen (minus four DRS and a minus 9.1 UZR/150 in 590 innings in center), but he made a number of dynamic game-saving plays.

2019 outlook: Allen stepped as a starter throughout last season, but the 25-year-old switch-hitter might profile best as a fourth outfielder. If he is not in the starting nine next year, Allen could have a home as a backup for all three spots, while offering speed off the bench.

He said it: "Early in the season, he was kind of getting beat up. Then, we went and got Leonys because of it. Leonys goes down and Greg -- like, right in front of our eyes -- was getting better. That's hard to do at the Major League level. He made a lot of strides. It was really, really a bright spot to see him do that in the middle of August." -- Francona

Bradley Zimmer

Contract status: Zimmer is not eligible for arbitration until 2021 at the earliest and he has two Minor League options remaining.

2018 recap: After a promising showing in '17, Zimmer began last season as the Tribe's Opening Day center fielder. He continued to be a stellar defender and baserunner, but his 38.6 percent strikeout rate led to a trip back to Triple-A Columbus in June. In 34 MLB games, he hit .226/.281/.330 for Cleveland. A right shoulder injury in the Minors then led to labrum repair surgery, ending his season.

2019 outlook: Zimmer's surgery came with an eight-to-12 month recovery timetable, meaning the outfielder may not be ready for the start of next season. In all likelihood, Zimmer will need to use the first half of '19 to get back up to speed. Do not expect Zimmer to be part of the Opening Day plans.

He said it: "We do expect him to be able to play for the majority of next year. Exactly when that will be will be determined by how he reaches each of those checkpoints, but he's still on track." -- Antonetti

Tyler Naquin

Contract status: Naquin is not eligible for arbitration until 2020 at the earliest and he has one Minor League option remaining.

2018 recap: Naquin began last season as the Indians' Opening Day left fielder, but spent time in all three outfield spots. In 61 games in the big leagues, he hit .264/.295/.356. His season ended in August due to right hip surgery. Naquin returned in time to take part in an intrasquad game during Cleveland's preparation for the postseason, giving him some confidence going into the offseason.

2019 outlook: The late-season return to the field -- even in a simulated environment -- was a big step for Naquin, who will be contending for a spot on the Opening Day roster in '19. While he could play center, Naquin looks like a better fit for right field, especially with Lonnie Chisenhall (a similar player) hitting free agency. Like Allen and Zimmer, Naquin could also be optioned to the Minors, if Cleveland addresses outfield needs externally.

He said it: "Nake did a great job. Sometimes when you're [rehabbing] in Arizona, you can feel kind of out of sight, out of mind. He not only came back quickly and healthy, he was swinging the bat so well. It was so obvious that he had put so much time into what he was doing. We were really proud of him." -- Francona

Oscar Mercado

Contract status: Mercado has not reached the Majors, but is on the 40-man roster and has two Minor League options remaining.

2018 recap: The Indians acquired Mercado at the July 31 non-waiver Trade Deadline from the Cardinals, adding an intriguing depth piece to the mix. He played all three outfield spots in '18, but is viewed as a center fielder. In 132 games between Triple-A Memphis and Columbus, the 23-year-old right-handed hitter turned in a .278/.349/.390 slash line. In the process, Mercado had eight homers, 26 doubles, 37 steals, 49 walks, 85 runs and 87 strikeouts.

2019 outlook: The expectation is that Mercado will open the '19 season back with Columbus, but he will be a name to monitor as the year progresses. It was an under-the-radar trade for Cleveland, but Mercado could soon find himself on the Major League radar. Francona and his staff will get a good look at him during Spring Training.

He said it: "He's a very athletic player. He transitioned from shortstop to center field a couple of years ago and has really made that transition well. We think he's an above-average defender with above-average speed that adds a very good option for us in the near-term at the Major League level in the outfield." -- Antonetti, on July 31

Chu embraces AFL after reaching Triple-A

By Mike Rosenbaum MLB.com @GoldenSombbrero

Li-Jen Chu participating in this year's Arizona Fall League speaks to his impressive development on and off the field.

Signed out of Taiwan in November 2012, Chu immediately embraced the opportunity to learn English upon entering Cleveland's system, and it wasn't long before he had adopted a nickname (of sorts).

"When I was here first year we had to take English class," said Chu. "The teacher gave me the name, 'Sam.' I liked it, so I keep using it."

Chu's willingness to go by either name is reflective of a personality that's made him an endearing presence on every team he's played for.

"I feel more friendly," said the 24-year-old catcher. "You have an American name and also a Taiwanese name...so people can call you 'Sam' or 'Chu.' I feel a lot of fun with that."

"My personality is not shy," he added, "so I talk to a lot of teammates. I have a lot of fun with those guys."

That's not to say Chu didn't face challenges along the way as he acclimated himself to pro ball in the United States.

"The first year was a little bit tough," he admitted, "but now I feel used to it ... comfortable talking to pitchers. Your job is to communicate with the pitchers and know the situations, and if you know that everything comes easily."

Things started to come more easily for Chu in 2017, his fourth professional season but his first true full-season campaign. In 125 games at Class A Lake County, the right-handed hitter slashed .269/.338/.426 with a career-high 17 home runs.

Chu's success earned him more aggressive assignments this past season, with the backstop seeing time at Class A Advanced Lynchburg, Double-A Akron and even Triple-A Columbus. Altogether, he hit .272/.340/.425 between the three stops, with 10 home runs and 22 doubles in 99 games. Defensively, Chu threw out 25 percent of attempted basestealers, up from 18 percent the previous year.

Now playing in the Arizona Fall League, Chu has been reunited with fellow Indians prospect and Taiwan native Yu Chang on the Glendale Desert Dogs.

"I've known him since I was 9 or 10 years old. We were roommates at 15 when [Taiwan] played Chinese Taipei, so we're good friends, good brothers," Chu said.

Expanded cuisine options has been another perk of playing in the Fall League for Chu, who's already found a go-to place for Taiwanese food in Mesa, Ariz.

"It wasn't easy finding Taiwanese food in different cities," said Chu. "Only hamburgers."

Indians hitters in the Fall League

Yu Chang, SS/3B -- Spending his age-22 season with Triple-A Columbus, Chang produced a .256/.330/.411 line with 13 home runs while playing the bulk of his 127 games as a shortstop. He's improved defensively in every season and committed just nine errors in 94 games at short with Columbus. Now 23, Chang is back in the Fall League this year after hitting .304 over 15 games with Mesa in 2017.

Connor Marabell, OF -- The 24-year-old outfielder hit .296/.341/.481 with 11 homers and 23 doubles over 89 games at Double-A Akron en route to midseason All-Star honors in the Eastern League. But after receiving a promotion to Triple-A Columbus, Marabell batted just .214 with a .584 OPS in 31 games.

Indians pitchers in the Fall League

Justin Garza, RHP -- The 2015 eighth-rounder landed on the disabled twice in 2018 but pitched well when healthy, registering a 3.71 ERA with 69 strikeouts and 22 walks in 68 innings (16 starts) at Lynchburg. He sits around 92-93 mph with his fastball and features a pair of secondary offerings in a slider and changeup.

Rob Kaminsky, LHP -- In his third full season since joining the Indians via a trade from St. Louis in July 2015, Kaminsky once again was beset by injuries and didn't begin his season in earnest until mid-June. Once he got going, the 24-year-old southpaw pitched to a 2.84 ERA with four saves and 69 percent ground-ball rate over 28 1/3 innings (25 appearances) between Lynchburg and Akron.

Jared Robinson, RHP -- Robinson was chosen for the Fall League after a breakout regular season that concluded with a Double-A appearance after he'd posted a 2.65 ERA with 56 strikeouts in 51 innings for Lynchburg. The 2014 11th-rounder has prototypical bullpen stuff in a mid-90s fastball that he pairs with a hard slider.

Dalbert Siri, RHP -- Signed out of the Dominican Republic in November 2014, Siri tallied a career-high 15 saves while posting a 2.45 ERA and .182 BAA out of the bullpen for Class A Advanced Lynchburg. The 23-year-old righty has power stuff in the form of a mid-90s fastball and sharp slider, and together they helped him rack up 71 strikeouts in 47 2/3 innings.

Indians have four AL Gold Glove finalists

By Ryan Lewis

The Indians have four American League Gold Glove finalists.

Shortstop Francisco Lindor, third baseman Jose Ramirez, catcher Yan Gomes and pitcher Corey Kluber were named AL Gold Glove finalists by Rawlings on Thursday. The winners, picked from one of the three finalists at each position and in each league, will be announced in early November after the completion of the World Series between the Los Angeles Dodgers and Boston Red Sox.

Lindor is a finalist at shortstop along with the Oakland A's Marcus Semien and the Los Angeles Angels' all-world Andrelton Simmons. Among qualified AL shortstops, Lindor was second in the league in defensive runs saved (14), UZR (14.1) and defensive rating (21.2), trailing Simmons (21 DRS, 19.7 UZR, 26.2 DEF) in all three categories. Lindor won the Gold Glove, as well as the Platinum Glove, in 2016.

Ramirez joins fellow MVP candidate Alex Bregman of the Houston Astros and Matt Chapman of the A's as Gold Glove finalists at third base. Chapman is the clear favorite after dominating his position with 29 defensive runs saved. Ramirez, who came in third in the AL with three runs saved, was fifth among qualified AL third basemen with a 3.3 UZR.

Gomes is joined at catcher by the Astros' Martin Maldonado and the Kansas City Royals' Salvador Perez, a four-time winner. Gomes had a resurgent season at the plate en route to an All-Star selection, but he also had a better defensive year in some respects than he had in recent seasons. Gomes finished with 9.2 Fielding Runs Above Average, according to Baseball Prospectus, his best mark since 2014. Perez topped the AL with a 14.1 defensive rating, according to FanGraphs.

Kluber, the Astros' Dallas Keuchel and New York Yankees starter Masahiro Tanaka are the three finalists at pitcher. Tanaka led the AL with seven defensive runs saved, easily besting Kluber's three, though defensive analytics for pitchers can be considered statistically noisy because of the very small sample sizes.

Solid gold: Cleveland Indians have 4 Gold Glove finalists in Lindor, Ramirez, Gomes, Kluber

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

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- The season didn't end the way the Indians wanted it to, but that doesn't mean they still can't strike gold.

Third baseman Jose Ramirez, shortstop Francisco Lindor, catcher Yan Gomes and right-hander Corey Kluber were named finalists for the Rawlings' American League Gold Glove awards on Thursday. The Gold Glove represents the top defensive players at their respective positions.

The winners will be named on Nov. 4. Managers and coaches, restricted to voting for players only in their league, comprise 75 percent of the vote. Sabermetrics account for the other 25 percent.

Ramirez, Houston's Alex Bregman and Oakland's Matt Chapman are the finalists at third base.

Lindor, Oakland's Marcus Semien and Andrelton Simmons of the Angels are the finalists at shortstop.

Gomes, Houston's Martin Maldonado and Kansas City's Salvador Perez are the finalists at catcher.

Kluber, Houston's Dallas Keuchel and New York's Masahiro Tanaka are the finalists at pitcher.

Ramirez was a finalist last year, but Evan Longoria won the award. Ramirez, as he did in 2017, started this year at third base, but moved to second when the Indians acquired Josh Donaldson.

The switch-hitting Ramirez made 137 starts at third and 16 at second. He ranked fourth among AL third baseman with three defensive runs saved, according to Fangraphs.com. He made 14 errors (11 at third), two more than he did in 2017. He posted a .965 fielding percentage at third.

Lindor won the Gold Glove in 2016. He was also the Platinum Gold Glove winner as the top defender in the AL that year. He was a Gold Glove finalist in 2017, but Simmons won it.

The switch-hitting Lindor played 157 games at short, covering 1,386 1/3 innings. He posted a .976 fielding percentage (586 total chances and 14 errors). Fangraphs.com graded him out at 14 defensive runs saved, which ranked third among MLB shortstops. Lindor made just one error over his last 58 games.

Gomes has never won a Gold Glove, but this is the second straight year he's been a finalist. He threw out 27 percent (18-for-67) of the runners who tried to steal on him. Tribe pitchers posted a 3.83 ERA with him behind the plate.

Maldonado, playing for the Angels at the time, won the Gold Glove last year.

This is the first time Kluber has been a Gold Glove finalist. He did not make an error in 33 starts, recording 19 putouts and 13 assists in 32 total chances.

Toronto's Marcus Stroman won the Gold Glove last year for AL pitchers.

As a team the Indians ranked fifth in fielding percentage at .986. They made 83 errors. Houston was first with a .989 fielding percentage and 63 errors.

World Series 2018: Red Sox beat Dodgers, 5-1, and win 4th championship in 15 years

By Associated Press

LOS ANGELES -- The Boston Red Sox really are that great.

David Price proved his postseason mettle, Steve Pearce homered twice and Boston beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 5-1 on Sunday to finish off a one-sided World Series in five games.

Long downtrodden during decades of despair before ending an 86-year championship drought in 2004, the Red Sox have become baseball's team of the century with four titles in 15 seasons.

Alex Cora's team romped to a 17-2 start and a club-record 108 wins, then went 11-3 in the postseason, dispatching the 100-win New York Yankees and the 103-victory and defending champion Houston Astros in the playoffs. Cora became the first manager from Puerto Rico to win a title and just the fifth rookie manager overall.

Pearce hit a two-run homer on Clayton Kershaw's sixth pitch. Solo homers by Mookie Betts in the sixth inning and J.D. Martinez in the seventh quieted the Dodger Stadium crowd, and Pearce added a solo drive off Pedro Baez in the eighth.

Pearce, a June acquisition from Toronto, had three homers and seven RBIs in the final two games of the Series.

After losing to Houston in Game 7 last year by the same 5-1 score, the Dodgers became the first team defeated on its home field in consecutive World Series since the New York Giants by the New York Yankees at the Polo Grounds in 1936 and '37.

Boston won its ninth title, tying the Athletics for third-most behind the Yankees (27) and Cardinals (11). All that stood between the Red Sox and a sweep was an 18-inning loss in Game 3, the longest World Series game ever. They trailed 4-0 in the seventh inning of Game 4 when ace Chris Sale rose from the dugout bench for a fiery, profane, motivational rant and woke up for a 9-6 win. Boston never trailed in Game 5.

The 33-year-old Price, a Cy Young Award winner in 2012, long pitched under an October shadow cast by his regular-season success. He had been 0-9 in 11 postseason starts before defeating Astros ace Justin Verlander in the clinching Game 5 of the AL Championship Series. He won his third straight start Sunday and became the first pitcher to beat Cy Young winners in the finale of an LCS and the World Series in the same year.

David Price's postseason reinvention continued and bats supported him as Red Sox rolled to a World Series championship.

After allowing two runs over six innings to win Game 2 last Wednesday, Price got two outs in the ninth inning of Friday's marathon game. He became the first to pitch into the eighth inning of a Series game on one day of rest since the Yankees' Bob Turley in 1957.

Price gave up a home run to David Freese on his first pitch, then allowed just two more hits -- the last a triple to Freese that Martinez lost in the third-inning twilight and allowed to drop behind him in right. Price struck out five and walked two, retiring 14 in a row before a leadoff walk to Chris Taylor in the eighth ended his night after 89 pitches. He tapped his heart several times to Red Sox fans behind the first base dugout while walking to the bench.

Joe Kelly struck out three straight pinch hitters and Sale, originally scheduled to start Game 5, fanned three more in the ninth. Sale ended by throwing a slider past Manny Machado, a meager 4 for 22 (.182) in the Series, and raised both arms as catcher Christian Vazquez ran out to jump on him with glee and teammates from the dugout and bullpens followed.

While Price rewrote his own legacy, Kershaw was unable to change his. He dropped to 1-4 with a 6.06 ERA in postseason elimination games. Plagued at times by an aching back, the 30-year-old lefty no longer is the dominant pitcher who won three Cy Young Awards, his famous 12-to-6 breaking ball now more 10 to 4:30.

Kershaw allowed four runs and seven hits -- three of them homers -- in seven innings. He is 9-10 with a 4.32 ERA in 30 postseason appearances, a huge drop from his 153-69 record and 2.39 ERA during the regular season.

He began aggressively, throwing strikes on his first six pitches, and the Red Sox were ready.

Andrew Benintendi hit a one-out single and Pearce pulled a fastball over the middle of the plate and sent it 405 feet into the left-field pavilion.

While the crowd of 54,367 for Dodger Stadium's final game this year was stunned, Freese woke up fans in the bottom half. He drove Price's first pitch 402 feet to the opposite field and into the right field pavilion.

Betts homered on a slider that stayed in the strike zone after going 0 for 13 in Los Angeles this weekend, the first postseason home run of his career coming in his 87th at-bat. Martinez homered in the seventh, driving a fastball to straightway center.

Cleveland Indians invite RHP Shao-Ching Chiang, LHP R.C. Orlan to spring training

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio - The Indians have invited right-hander Shao-Ching Chiang and left-hander R.C. Orlan to big-league spring training in February on minor-league deals.

Chiang and Orlan were among six internal free agents that have been re-signed by the Indians.

Last season Chiang, a native of Taiwan, pitched at Class AA Akron and Class AAA Columbus. He went 5-2 with a 2.90 ERA in 12 starts at Akron, striking out 54 and walking 13 in 71 1/3 innings. Chiang went 4-5 with a 5.01 ERA in 13 games, including 11 starts, at Columbus. He struck out 39 and walked 11 in 64 2/3 innings.

Chiang has been in the organization since in 2012. In 2017, he threw a no-hitter for Class A Lynchburg.

Orlan, a Rule 5 draft pick from Washington last year, pitched at five levels for the Tribe after missing the first three months with a strained left shoulder. He went 1-0 with a 0.61 ERA in 23 games. Orlan made just two appearances at Columbus.

Infielder Dan Hutcheon, right-handers John Paulson and Michael Peoples and left-hander Anderson Polanco are the other four players the Indians re-signed.

Hutcheon played with the Lake Erie Crushers last season before the Indians signed him on Aug. 21. He played 13 games at Class A Lake County. He is a former draft pick of the Twins.

Paulson split last season between Class A Lynchburg and Akron. He was a combined 10-7 with a 3.30 ERA in 24 games, including 23 starts. Paulson went 8-5 with a 3.04 ERA in 20 games, including 19 starts, at Akron. The Reds drafted Paulson in the 27th round in 2014.

Peoples, slowed by right foot and elbow injuries, pitched in 10 games at Akron and Columbus last year. He was 1-2 with 1.11 ERA in six starts at Akron, striking out 26 in 32 1/3 innings. Peoples made four starts at Columbus, going 0-2 with a 16.50 ERA.

The Indians drafted Peoples in the 14th round in 2012.

Polanco went 2-2 with a 3.72 ERA in 29 games at Lynchburg. He struck out 56 and walked 21 in 51 innings.

This is not the time for the Cleveland Indians to trade Corey Kluber: Tribe Take

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio - David Price did all right Wednesday night for a pitcher who can't pitch in the postseason.

Price started Game 2 of the World Series and allowed two runs on three hits in six innings in Boston's 4-2 win over the Dodgers at Fenway Park. The Red Sox lead the Dodgers, 2-0, as the series moves to Los Angeles.

This postseason Price is 2-1 with a 4.42 ERA in four starts. He's struck out 18, walked nine and allowed nine earned runs in 18 1/3 innings. Not great, eye-popping numbers, but certainly good enough when supported by an offense that outlasted Houston in the ALCS - and that's saying something - and a maligned bullpen that seems to be populated with relievers who throw only 98 mph and above.

To be sure Price, at this stage of his career, will never be known as the next Andy Pettitte, Orel Hershiser or Whitey Ford when it comes to postseason success. He's 4-9 with a 4.91 ERA in 21 postseason appearances.

What he does is offer an example that talent, given an opportunity, can play and succeed in any situation.

It brings to mind Corey Kluber and the speculation, some of it in the media and some among fans, that now would be a good time for the Indians to trade the two-time Cy Young winner. One of the reasons given is Kluber's poor performance in the last two postseasons. He went 0-1 with a 12.79 ERA in two starts against the Yankees in the 2017 ALDS. This year he went 0-1 with a 7.71 ERA against Houston in Game 1 of the ALDS.

But in 2016, Kluber carried an injured rotation to Game 7 of the World Series by going 4-1 with a 1.83 ERA (seven earned runs in 34 1/3 innings) over six starts. He made three starts in the World Series, winning the first two. Kluber's six starts are tied for first place and his four wins are tied for third among single-season performances in postseason history.

Kluber, 33 in April, went 20-7 with a 2.89 ERA in 33 starts during the regular season this year. He led the AL in innings pitched with 215 and while his strikeouts decreased, he still finished fifth in the league with 222.

The track record of postseason success is there. Who's to say he won't have it again?

The Indians haven't traded a pitcher of Kluber's status since they dealt Cy Young winners CC Sabathia and Cliff Lee in 2008 and 2009, respectively. They dealt Sabathia because he was in his walk year and they had no chance of keeping him. They dealt Lee, who still have a year left on his contract, because ownership said they were leaking money.

Kluber is expected to make an estimated \$17 million in 2019. The Indians hold club options on him for 2020 and 2021 worth an estimated \$17.5 million and \$18 million, depending on how he finishes in the Cy Young voting in November.

The Indians have a lot of holes to fill this winter and a trade of Kluber would help. But who would replace him as the team's No. 1 starter? Considering production and cost, few do it better. Price will make \$31 million next year, Max Scherzer \$42 million and Justin Verlander \$28 million.

Despite facing the prospect of losing several quality players to free agency after the World Series, the Indians are still a good team. Trading Kluber would not help them.

Don't count on free agency changing the Indians fortunes | Jeff Schudel

By Jeff Schudel JSchudel@News-Herald.com @JSProlInsider on Twitter Oct 27, 2018 Comments

Free agency in baseball and football are different animals, we are about to reminded again.

Most all the drama in NFL free agency is over after one or two days because most of the haggling is done before the signing period begins. The Browns, for example, officially acquired quarterback Tyrod Taylor, wide receiver Jarvis Landry, defensive back Damarious Randall, defensive end Chris Smith, cornerback Terrance Mitchell, tight end Darren Fells, cornerback T.J. Carrie and right tackle Chris Hubbard all within two days of the beginning of the league year on March 14 because general manager John Dorsey worked out deals beforehand.

Baseball free agency usually moves like a grumpy old tortoise with arthritis by comparison.

The 2019 baseball calendar begins the day after the current World Series ends. Teams have a five-day window to make a one-year \$17.9 million qualifying offer to their own free agents.

A player given a qualifying offer has a week to sign it, something that rarely happens. Qualifying offers became part of free agency after the 2012 season. Only two of 53 qualifying offers in the five years they've been in place have been accepted.

If a team makes a qualifying offer to a player and he signs with another team before the June amateur draft, his former team is compensated with a draft pick at the end of the first round.

A team can make a qualifying offer only to a player who has been with that team since the start of the season. In other words, the Indians cannot make a qualifying offer to free agent to be Josh Donaldson because he was with Toronto to start the season.

Players without contracts can start signing with other teams after the five-day window for making qualifying offers closes.

The Indians, after winning the American League Central Division for the third straight year and getting bounced from the ALDS for the second straight year, will not be going on a wild shopping spree when the market opens. They will have to use their farm system and trades to fill vacancies that losing players through free agency will create.

Left fielder Michael Brantley is the Indians' top free agent. Others include relief pitchers Andrew Miller, Cody Allen, Oliver Perez and (sometimes starter) Josh Tomlin; infielders Donaldson and Adam Rosales plus outfielders Brantley, Melky Cabrera, Lonnie Chisenhall and Rajai Davis.

Brantley is the only one of their 11 free agents the Indians should even think about making a qualifying offer to, and that is unlikely because of other obligations they have.

"The one thing we do know 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," team president Chris Antonetti said at a wrap-up press conference earlier this month. "We had a franchise record payroll this year (\$142,804,703) just to retain those guys that are under contract. It would a payroll even above where are right now even before we add anyone externally."

The Indians have a club option on starting pitcher Carlos Carrasco. He made \$8 million in 2018 and will make \$9.75 million next season if the Indians pick up the option.

Outfielder Brandon Guyer has a \$3 million club option for 2019, a raise of only \$250,000. Edwin Encarnacion will make \$20 million in 2019 after making \$17 million in 2018. Jason Kipnis is getting a \$1 million raise to \$14.5 million. Ace pitcher Corey Kluber is getting a \$4.5 million bump to \$15 million in 2019. All those contracts are guaranteed.

Pitcher Trevor Bauer (\$6.25 million in 2018) and shortstop Francisco Lindor (\$623,000 in 2018) are arbitration eligible. Both deserve staggering raises; Lindor might have been the most underpaid player in baseball the last two years. He made \$579,300 in 2017.

Baltimore Orioles center fielder Adam Jones was linked to the Indians in trade deadline rumors. The Orioles are in a massive rebuild. Jones, 33, does not figure to be part of that process. He played in 145 games a year ago and homered 15 times while driving in 63 runs.

Jones could help stabilize a shaky outfield if Brantley leaves and be the clubhouse leader, ala Mike Napoli, that manager Terry Francona believes is vital to team success. Jones made \$17 million with the Orioles in 2018.

Nick Cafardo / Dodgers better secure Dave Roberts's services before somebody else does

By Nick Cafardo

Dodgers general manager Farhan Zaidi recently told MLB Network, "As far as Dave goes, those conversations have been ongoing for the last couple months. As the conversation's going, certainly we would prefer to work out something longer term than just picking up the option. All sides feel good about it. [We] haven't been commenting too extensively, publicly, but obviously he's done a tremendous job with this club."

Those were some of the first public comments the Dodgers have made about the future of manager Dave Roberts. They were encouraging words, but Roberts's future has been one of the ongoing sidebars of this World Series. Roberts has said that this is his dream job. Managing the Dodgers fits his lifestyle, his family situation. There are a thousand reasons why Los Angeles is where Roberts wants to be.

There's an option on Roberts's contract worth about \$1.1 million and the Dodgers could simply pick it up. But that would create a lame-duck situation. Nobody wants that. And though other situations wouldn't be as well suited for Roberts, he could be the most in-demand manager if he were a free agent.

Where the Dodgers have fumbled a little is that Roberts's contract situation should have been resolved a long time ago. Zaidi says the talks have gone on for two months, which seems a tad long for a manager's contract. What's the issue?

Roberts has earned the right to be in the top five salaries, hasn't he? Shouldn't he be in the \$3 million-\$5 million range per season? If Dodger management is trying to lowball him, shame on them.

Everything baseball every Monday-Friday during baseball season, and weekly in the offseason.

Roberts led the Dodgers to 104 wins in his second year last season and got to Game 7 of the World Series, only to lose to Houston. This season, as injuries set in, the Dodgers struggled early and often. On Aug. 22, they were 4½ games behind in the NL West race with a 67-61 record. They went on to win 92 games and win the division by one game over Colorado.

One of the silly narratives developing is that Roberts may be the baseball version of Marv Levy, which is ridiculous. Levy led the Buffalo Bills to four straight Super Bowls, losing all of them.

Step back a bit and understand how tough it is to even get to a Super Bowl, and understand how tough it is to get to back-to-back World Series. In Roberts's case, can we surmise that both the 2017 Astros and the 2018 Red Sox are simply better teams than the Dodgers? If you're not coming to that conclusion then your thinking is sketchy.

If there's a "problem" it's in the roster, not the person who manages the roster.

The platoons, which we're certain are managed from the front office, worked well in getting the Dodgers to the World Series. The platoons now look silly. In Games 1 and 2, the Dodgers' best hitters were sitting on the bench because the Red Sox had lefthanders Chris Sale and David Price starting those games. Chris Taylor, Kike Hernandez, and Austin Barnes were significant contributors in platoons during the season, but you were looking at the Dodgers' lineup during Games 1 and 2 and just scratching your head.

One of my colleagues pointed out that in the pre-Series matchups I had given the bench edge to the Red Sox and he wondered why after seeing who was on the Dodgers' bench. They were guys who should have been in the starting lineup even though they were lefthanded hitters.

The Red Sox certainly didn't shy away from using Jackie Bradley Jr., Rafael Devers or Andrew Benintendi against Dodgers lefties Clayton Kershaw and Hyun-Jin Ryu. That's because Alex Cora can make out his own lineup without reprisal from the front office if he doesn't follow recommendations. Cora is as analytical as anyone, but he also understands how guys are swinging and how he feels they project against a certain pitcher.

I'm not sure that happens with the Dodgers.

We get that in this era the manager's biggest role is managing the personalities in the clubhouse. The strategic part is normally handled by the analytics department and to a lesser degree the advance scouting. In some organizations, the manager has to go by what the front office says.

Roberts is respected by the players, by opponents, by baseball people everywhere. If Dodgers management bungle these negotiations, Roberts would likely be scooped up in no time.

Roberts is like the dream "out front" guy for any team. He's respectful of not only players but people around the game. The Dodgers — and give credit to owner Mark Walter here — did a great job identifying Roberts as the person who should be the front man for their organization when they hired him three years ago.

Roberts is a Red Sox hero. He stole second base in Game 4 of the 2004 ALCS against the Yankees, which triggered one of the greatest comebacks in baseball history and led to the Red Sox' sweep of the Cardinals in the World Series to break an 86-year championship drought.

It is why Red Sox fans gave him a standing ovation before Game 1 this year at Fenway. It is why he came out of the visitors' dugout and hugged former Red Sox teammates as they were introduced before throwing out the first pitch prior to Game 2. Roberts also had his cancer treatments in Boston, and has been in remission. The city means a lot to him.

The Dodgers have a gem in Roberts — the way he handles people, the media, his positive personality. This isn't a negotiation Dodgers management should screw up.

Apropos of nothing

1. We've been touting Rocco Baldelli as a potential managerial candidate in this column for a couple of years. And finally someone listened. The Twins hired him to replace Paul Molitor. At 37, Baldelli will be the game's youngest manager. If you're looking for the next Alex Cora, well, Baldelli might be it. He has developed a strong reputation working as a coach for Tampa Bay manager Kevin Cash. He was a first base coach and then this season became the major league field coordinator, adapting well to analytics in game situations.
2. If the Red Sox win the World Series it'll be interesting to see how many of the non-uniformed personnel get full or partial playoff shares. The trainers, medical staff, PR and marketing people, grounds crew — so many did a lot of behind-the-scenes work to get to this point.
3. This is likely a scenario you're going to see a lot of down the road: older scouts filing age discrimination suits. That's what Howard Norsetter did when he filed a suit last Monday against the Twins. Norsetter had been with the team since 1990 and moved up to international scouting coordinator and minor league international supervisor in 2002. He has been responsible for producing many of the Twins' international players over the years. He was dismissed in 2017 and the dismissal was not due to performance. Older scouts around major league baseball have been dismissed from teams, who are moving toward more analytical ways to evaluate talent.
4. The third annual Pedro Martinez Foundation Gala will be held Nov. 2 at the Mandarin Oriental in Boston. The foundation is "devoted to transforming the lives of children through holistic education and social services and has positively impacted over 10,000 children and families." Yankees pitcher Luis Severino, former Red Sox catcher Jason Varitek, Hall of Famer Vladimir Guerrero, Indians pitchers Corey Kluber and Danny Salazar, and Cardinals outfielder Marcell Ozuna will all walk the red carpet with Pedro Martinez.
5. It's going to be an awkward two years in Pawtucket with the Red Sox Triple A franchise scheduled to move into a new facility in Worcester in 2021. Pawtucket will likely seek another franchise to move into McCoy Stadium, which would need renovations. Short-season Lowell's agreement with the Red Sox ends after the 2020 season and remains one possibility for a move. Otherwise, McCoy may be looking at an independent team.
6. Aren't you happy now that Dave Dombrowski depleted the farm system? You deplete a farm system so you can win a World Series. He appears to be on the verge of his second, which would make one in each league (Marlins, 1997).
7. I really respect MLB Network analyst Mark DeRosa for holding off teams who want him to manage. Texas and Toronto contacted him, but DeRosa is considering what's best for his family and the best managerial situation that doesn't involve a major rebuild. DeRosa has long been targeted as that next big managerial prospect, but he's very happy in his analyst role and he's very good at it.
8. In the few times I've had a chance to listen, Alex Rodriguez really carries that Fox pregame and postgame show.

Updates on nine

1. Forrest Whitley, RHP, Astros — According to one veteran scout, Whitley has been the class of the Arizona Fall League on the pitching side. Vladimir Guerrero Jr. was clearly the class of the league on the positional side. The scout said Whitley, who is coming off a PED suspension that limited him to eight starts for Double A Corpus Christi, could pitch in the majors right now "and if the Astros decide not to re-sign Charlie Morton he could easily fit into that back-of-the-rotation slot." According to the scout, Guerrero "should have been in the majors last year. The one underrated aspect of his game is his ability to run. He can get around the bases for a big kid."
2. Charlie Montoyo, manager, Blue Jays — With a prominent Latin American player (Guerrero) likely to be the leader of the team in the future, the Blue Jays hired Montoyo, who was Kevin Cash's bench coach. Montoyo managed the Durham Bulls for three years and in the Rays'

system for 18 years. Like Alex Cora, he hails from Puerto Rico. The Rays considered him a top communicator, popular with the players. It'll be interesting to see whether Montoyo keeps bench coach DeMarlo Hale or third base coach Luis Rivera, who also hails from Puerto Rico.

3. David Price, LHP, Red Sox — Price recently commented on how slow he is between pitches: "I think there's three minutes in between innings for commercials and every pitch is so big, you're not going to go out there and rush through pitches. You're taught ever since you were a little kid to be able to slow the game down, and now baseball wants to speed it up. I don't care, I'm taking my time. I know I'm slow." How slow? During the regular season, Justin Verlander at 27 seconds between pitches was the slowest in the majors, while Price was next at 26.9 seconds.

4. Brock Holt, utilityman, Red Sox — Holt discussed why John Farrell is no longer managing the Red Sox and why Cora has been better for the team: "There wasn't a whole lot of communication in the past. And just kind of the vibe that [Cora] brings, the looseness. Not being too far removed from playing himself, he understands the game is hard. And he believes in us. I just think the overall vibe that he brings to the clubhouse is so positive that it's easy for us to go out and kind of do what we've been doing."

5. Jeremy Kapstein, special assistant, Orioles — With all the talk about former agent Brodie Van Wagenen getting the general manager's job with the Mets, Kapstein, who was the most prominent players' agent of his time, went from agent to president of the San Diego Padres in 1990. Kapstein eventually executed the sale of the Padres on behalf of the Kroc family to Tom Werner. Kapstein was then hired by the Red Sox as an adviser and helped run the team with Bill Lajoie. Kapstein spent the last three years as an adviser to Orioles general manager Dan Duquette.

6. Ben Cherington, vice president of player development, Blue Jays — There's a feeling out there that if Cherington got the Baltimore GM or president job that Farrell would be a prominent candidate for manager. Of course, the Orioles' situation would be a massive rebuild and one wonders whether Farrell would want those working conditions.

7. Kim Ng, senior vice president of baseball operations, MLB — Ng has long been linked to GM jobs, but there's growing legitimacy for her candidacy in both San Francisco and Baltimore. One scenario is the possibility of a Ng/Ned Colletti tandem. They worked together in Los Angeles. Ng was also assistant GM for the Yankees before going to the Dodgers.

8. Matt Kemp, OF, Dodgers — He led all major leaguers with a .377 average against fastballs. Kemp beat out J.D. Martinez's .357 and Christian Yelich's .364. Mookie Betts topped everyone in hitting .352 against changeups. Kemp is a free agent and would appear to be someone's DH next season.

9. Hanley Ramirez, free agent — Ramirez played his last game for the Red Sox on May 24. He had been on an 0-for-21 run when it happened. Ramirez was hitting .254 with six homers and 29 RBIs at the time. The Red Sox were 34-16 and up by 1½ games in the AL East. Dustin Pedroia was about to return as the starting second baseman, and a roster spot was needed. Alex Cora didn't feel Ramirez would be suited for a role coming off the bench or to platoon with Mitch Moreland, who was hot and gaining more playing time. The Sox eventually replaced Ramirez with Steve Pearce, someone they thought could platoon and hit lefties. Since then Ramirez has not been heard from. He had also played for the Dodgers from 2012-14.