

# *Over the Monster*

## *2010 Annual*



**JON LESTER**

*Why He Will  
Become a  
Household  
Name in 2010*

**>> Page 5**

PHOTO BY KELLY O'CONNOR

## **INSIDE:**

*> What Can Sox Fans Expect Out of John Lackey?*

*> 'We F--ckin' Won': The Greatest Game I Ever Saw*

*> Behind the Brain of Theo Epstein and His Team*

*> OTM's Top 20 Red Sox Prospects*

*> J.D. Drew is Better Than You Think*

# Index

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Foreward by Randy Booth .....	3
>> <i>IN THE BIGS</i>	
Could Jon Lester Become 2010's Zack Greinke? by Tyler Hissey .....	5
J.D. Drew is More Than Meets the Eye by David Pinto .....	10
It Could be End of an Era After 2010 by Ben Buchanan .....	13
Will John Lackey's Right Arm Hold Up? by Troy Patterson .....	17
'We F--ckin' Won!' by Red .....	22
>> <i>DOWN ON THE FARM</i>	
The Philosophy Behind Theo Epstein's Madness by Ben Buchanan .....	27
A Taxing Trend in International Signings by Logan Lietz .....	37
Sox a 'Powerhouse' for Player Development by John Sickels .....	43
Westmoreland on Fast Track to Fenway Park by Logan Lietz .....	49
Over the Monster's Top 20 Prospects .....	56
>> <i>WHAT'S AHEAD?</i>	
Breaking Down the 40-Man Roster by OTM Staff .....	58
Yankees' Front Four 'Best in Baseball' by Travis G. ....	81
Orioles to Rely on Improved Youth in 2010 by Stacey .....	84
Blue Jays in Midst of Rebuilding Young Team by Tom Dakers .....	86
For Rays, it's 'One Chance, One Moment' by Steve Slowinski .....	88
OTM's 2010 Staff Predictions .....	90
Red Sox Predictions in 140 Characters or Less .....	91
>> <i>THE YEAR THAT WAS</i>	
Millions Shocked at Yankees' Tarnished Season by Randy Booth .....	93
The Pawtucket Red Sox Roster Crunch by Ben Buchanan .....	96
In Defense of Daisuke by 0157H7 .....	99
How to be a HaloFan, Vol. 1 by 0157H7 .....	102
For Once, Theo Epstein's Puzzle Pieces Do Not Fit by Randy Booth .....	107
Don't Blame Bucknor: Sox Lost Game One Themselves by Randy Booth ....	110
The 2009 Off Season's Impact on the Future by Logan Lietz .....	113
Let's Talk About Luxury Tax and the Red Sox by wolf9309 .....	119
Can the Red Sox Still Hit? by Ben Buchanan .....	123
The Forgotten Offensive Stat by wolf9309 .....	127

# Foreward This!

If you are reading this, thank you.

I personally don't even care if you continue to read the rest of the document. If you've made it this far, then I applaud you and you may pass go and you may collect \$200.

On second thought, this economy sucks, so please read the rest of the document. Or at least a lot of it. We put a lot of time and effort into this guy and hope you at least get a little enjoyment out of the Over the Monster Annual.

The idea for this Annual came quickly and without warning. I really wish there was a warning though, because we didn't have much time to work on it. A month, maybe? A month and a half? It didn't leave much time to 1) contact potential writers, 2) assign stories, 3) edit stories, 4) drink ridiculous amounts of green tea, 5) design the Annual, 6) stop the bleeding from my eyes because I stared at the computer screen too long, 7) repeat No. 5, 8) repeat No. 6. There's just not enough time in a day. Or a month ... and a half.

The purpose behind this Annual is to warm up Red Sox fans to the new season. Whether or not you're a fan of Over the Monster, we hope you read this (for whatever reason). Even if you just want to bash us, that's cool, too. But we still got you to read it. Ha!

We've got some new stuff, some old stuff and some crazy stuff. But, in the end, it's all Sox and it's all good. Devour it. Enjoy it. Spread it. And, if you're up for it, read it.

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# In the Bigs

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*Various insights on the Boston Red Sox. This chapter includes a look at the future of Jon Lester, the new ace of the Sox, and why J.D. Drew really is a good player. Really.*



PHOTO BY KELLY O'CONNOR / SITTINGSTILL.NET

*Jon Lester*

# Could Jon Lester Become 2010's Zack Greinke?

*By Tyler Hissey*

Jon Lester has accomplished a lot through the first four seasons of his major league career. Still only 26, Lester already has several major achievements that most veteran pitchers would kill for. He overcame cancer, was the winning pitcher in the Red Sox's World Series-clinching victory in 2007 and threw a no-hitter against the Kansas City Royals on May 19, 2008. On the surface, his baseball card stats are excellent, too. The southpaw has accumulated a 42-16 career record, 3.41 ERA and 128 ERA+ in 558.00 innings pitched in the majors.

Yet for some reason, Lester still gets overlooked on a national level and to most casual fans isn't considered to be one of the best pitchers in baseball. Which is surprising, since he has the story, having defeated cancer, and the traditional performance results that most fans normally cling to. When asking several baseball fan friends to name the top ten pitchers in baseball recently, however, it took several minutes for Lester's name to come up at the tail end of the discussion. The usual suspects, Zack Greinke, Roy Halladay, Tim Lincecum and Johan Santana, were the first to come up. Even his teammate, Josh Beckett, came up before him.

And that, to me, is really surprising. Lester is truly one of the elite hurlers in the game, and not just among lefties. While many were wondering what was wrong with him in the first half, he produced a tremendous campaign for Boston in 2009. Again, even at first glance it's easy to see how important he was to the Red Sox's starting rotation. He overcame rotten luck in the first two months of the season to post an overall 15-8 record with a 3.41 ERA and 138 ERA+. But those numbers don't come close to telling the whole story.

In reality, Lester ranked as a top-five pitcher in the American League when looking at the performance metrics that really matter/he could control. What sticks out the most, of course, is his excellent 9.96 K/9 rate. Only two pitchers in the game, Lincecum and Justin Verlander, produced better strikeout rates. The large jump in strikeouts was perhaps the most interesting note from his performance last season. Still regaining velocity as he worked his way back from cancer treatment, Lester struck out just 6.50 batters per nine in 2008. Thus, while it's easy to be skeptical that he'll sustain the '09 level, it did prove that he has swing-and-miss stuff that most pitchers can't close to matching.

He also produced solid peripherals in the other categories, posting rates of 2.83 BB/9, 47.7 GB% and 0.89 HR/9. His FIP (Fielding Independent Pitching) of 3.15 ranked 10th in the majors, and, since he logged 203.1



innings, pegged him as the seventh-most valuable pitcher in either league according to FanGraphs' Wins Above Replacement. His 6.2 WAR was higher than three pitchers who garnered serious Cy Young consideration in their respective leagues, Chris Carpenter, CC Sabathia and Adam Wainwright. Elite company, no doubt.

The way that some writers in Boston would tell the story, though, Lester was a liability for the Red Sox in the first two months of the year. It's true that his W-L record and ERA were ugly until June came and brought better luck for him. He entered the month 3-5 with a 6.07 ERA and 1.601 WHIP, killing his Fantasy owners. Most scribes for the Boston papers wondered aloud what was wrong with him. However, it was obvious what the real root of his struggles was straight up luck. As of May 31, he led the majors with a .374 batting average on balls in play and 17.5 HR/FB%, having allowed more "just enough" homers than any pitcher in the league according to Hit Tracker Online. He was then outstanding from that point on, as the BABIP came crashing down, even with one of the majors' worst defenses supporting him. He also had better fortune on fly balls turning into outs rather than home runs the rest of the way. The newfound summer success caused the Globe's Adam Kilgore to write that he was a different pitcher.

*"Jon Lester still can't figure out why, exactly, he started this season as a mediocre pitcher. He threw great in spring training. His preparation never changed. He didn't tinker with his mechanics. "I don't know what to do different," Lester said...*

*On the local television broadcast, Hall of Famer Jim Palmer called Lester the best lefthanded pitcher in the American League, which would have been odd praise for most pitchers sitting on an ERA north of 4.50 with a .500 record at the night's outset. But Lester is a different pitcher now than last month."*

Which was absurd, of course. Still, if you take away those first few months and Lester may have had more support from the writers when it was

time for awards.

From a scouting perspective, Lester displayed excellent stuff all season. His average fastball velocity rose to a career-best 93.6, up from 92.1 in '08, as he continued to rely on the heater as his go-to pitch. As well, he mixed in a high-80s cutter, mid-70s curveball and change-up. His diverse repertoire and MPH spike enabled him to miss bats and overcome Boston's weak defense, which ranked 28th in the majors in the rate at which batted balls hit into play are converted into outs.

Going forward, I genuinely believe that Lester will finally get the credit he deserves in 2010. He's a stud pitcher and it's time he starts getting the credit for being so. It really is difficult for a player from one of the game's marquee franchises to get overlooked, but he

*'Going forward, I genuinely believe that Lester will finally get the credit he deserves in 2010. He's a stud pitcher and it's time he starts getting the credit for being so.'*

has and is a legitimate Cy Young candidate in '10. For one, as has been well documented all offseason, the Red Sox made it a priority to improve their run prevention efforts this winter. The club now has a three center field model after signing Mike Cameron, whose flanked by Jacoby Ellsbury in left field and plus defender J.D. Drew in right field. The left side of the infield is also much improved with the acquisitions of shortstop Marco Scutaro and Adrian Beltre, who posted the highest UZR of any third baseman in the majors last year. Thus, expect an area of weakness, defense, to turn into a real strength for them. In turn, this will lead to more balls being converted into outs for the Boston pitching staff, lowering their ERAs and improving the other baseball card stats in the process. For once, Lester could now have lady luck on his side for the whole season.



There are still two prime concerns with him. He has now logged over 200.0 frames for two straight seasons. Will the heavy usage slow him down? More pressing, though, can he maintain the strikeout rate? Odds are, no, but he still should strike out around 8.8 hitters per nine, and, with another season under his belt, could continue to make strides on a command front as well. Lowering his walk rate will push him to an even more elite level.

Despite those concerns, Lester should remain one of the top starters around. I just hope he gets credit for it, especially since he goes to battle in the American League East. With a top-five defense behind him and that kind of stuff, he shouldn't sneak up on you when he becomes next year's Zack Greinke.

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*Tyler Hissey is a writer at ATMajors.com.*

# ***J.D. Drew Is More Than Meets The Eye***

*by David Pinto*

J.D. Drew

elicits strong positive and negative reactions from fans of the game. WEEI and Theo Epstein argue about Drew's value, the radio hosts seeing the right-fielder as overpaid, while Theo feels J.D. is justly compensated. These divergent views of Drew come from a combination of the nature of his offense and his tendency to get hurt.



PHOTO BY KELLY O'CONNOR / SITTINGSTILL.NET

***J.D. Drew***

Drew's career averages paint a picture of a complete hitter. Through the 2009 season he sports a .283 batting average, a .392 OBP and a .504 slugging percentage. He hits for average, gets on base at a high rate and generates power. His versatility means a team can get production from him in any part of the lineup. He OBP makes him a good table setter, and his power means he should succeed in delivering base runners to the plate.

His Triple Crown numbers fail to paint a similar picture. Drew's offense needs deeper analysis. For example, his batting average, while good,

doesn't scream star player. One way of examining the complexity of J.D.'s offense is to show how little his batting average contributes.

Bill James invented a way of measuring production called runs created, which in its simplest form is  $OBP * Total\ Bases$ . The batting average component of that formula would be  $Batting\ Average * Hits$ . So  $100.0 * (BA * Hits) / (OBP * TB)$  gives us the

percentage of runs created that comes from a player's batting average. The lower that percentage, the more the player uses diverse means to generate offense. Since Drew entered the majors in 1998, 99 players came to the plate at least 5000 times. Drew's batting average accounts for 40.6% of

*'Outs are the currency of baseball, and Drew holds his dear. He may not be that great at finishing a rally, but he doesn't end them, either.'*

his offense, the 22nd lowest number in the majors. The five with the lowest percentage are Barry Bonds (28.5), Adam Dunn (31.2), Jim Thome (33.0), Jason Giambi (35.4) and Troy Glaus (36.5), all sluggers who walk a ton. A few batters away from Drew in either direction are Alex Rodriguez (39.9) and Albert Pujols (41.5). Drew is in the company of very good hitters.

Drew's RBI totals don't look like those of a star power hitter either. On the list above, he ranks 67th in terms of RBI. Part of that is his injury history providing him fewer opportunities, but part of it is Drew's approach at the plate. RBI Percentage measures the percentage of runners driven in by a batter ( $100 * (RBI - HR) / Runners\ On$ ). Since Drew entered the league in 1998, **110 batters have come to the plate with at least 3000 men on base**. Drew ranks 85th with 14.55 percent of his runners driven in. Given his fine slugging percentage (power moves runners), why is that percentage so low?

Drew's approach at the plate with runners in scoring position explains this, and also why some people don't see the value in his offense. J.D.

draws a ton of walks with runners in scoring position. Walk rate can be measured by  $100 \times (\text{BB} - \text{IBB}) / (\text{PA} - \text{IBB})$ , (removing intentional walks. Drew walks 15.7% of the time with runners in scoring position, 11th highest in the majors (min 1000 RISP PA-IBB since 1988). Fans see this and think, “Drew is letting scoring opportunities go by, passing the buck to the next hitter.” He especially pales in comparison to Manny Ramirez, the player with the highest RBI percentage in that time, and David Ortiz, who ranks ninth. Since 1998, Ramirez walked 13.1% of the time with runners in scoring position, Ortiz 11.9%. They are more willing to swing the bat, and fans see them as clutch hitters.

What the Red Sox front office sees is a player who extends the offensive context. Drew doesn’t make outs at a high rate, which gives everyone else in the lineup more chances to come to the plate. Outs are the currency of baseball, and Drew holds his dear. He may not be that great at finishing a rally, but he doesn’t end them, either.

On top of that Drew is a good defender, a centerfielder playing a corner outfield position. As for his contract, since becoming a free agent Drew earned \$62.8 million but **generated \$71.2 million** worth of value for the Dodgers and Red Sox.

J.D. Drew’s approach to the game may not generate the most enthusiasm from fans. His injuries are frustrating. He does, however, earn his keep and generates enough offense and defense to help make Boston a very good team.

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*David Pinto runs BaseballMusings.com.*



PHOTO BY KELLY O'CONNOR / SITTINGSTILL.NET

**Jason Varitek**

# ***It Could Be the End of an Era After 2010***

***by Ben Buchanan***

In 2004, the Red Sox won the World Series. Three years later, they did it again.

The 2004 championship team was a self-proclaimed “bunch of idiots” put together by a GM who was anything but. Theo had brought together a collection of veterans whose talents had been underrated by the league at large along with a few top-tier talents like Pedro Martinez, Curt Schilling and Manny Ramirez. The result was the first Red Sox World Series title in 86 years.

The 2007 championship team was something altogether different. With only eight players remaining from the 2004 World Series roster (Manny, Mirabelli, Ortiz, Schilling, Timlin, Varitek, Wakefield, and Youkilis), this team was showing the rewards of Theo Epstein's prized player development machine. Amongst these rewards: a rookie of the year second baseman, a cup-of-coffee centerfielder who ended up hitting .360 in the postseason, an ace and an all-star third baseman (acquired, of course, for a top prospect), a star closer, and a young up-and-coming lefty who won the clinching game four of the World Series just a year after being diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Even Kevin Youkilis was really more a member of the 2007 group, having only 2 at bats in the 2004 postseason.

Still, the old holdovers remained. Curt was the No. 2 starter in the rotation. Ortiz and Manny were the same old devastating duo from 2004. Varitek had been promoted to captain in 2005 and was as reliable a backstop as ever, while his backup Doug Mirabelli was still Tim Wakefield's personal catcher. Even Mike Timlin, at 41, was able to do his part -- in fact, he was even better than he had been in 2004.

Going into the 2010 season, though, it is clear that the time for these greats from 2004 is coming to an end. The number of holdovers from 2004 is down to three, with only Ortiz, Wakefield, and Varitek remaining. Come next year, the number could well be down to zero.

David Ortiz, at 34, is coming off the two worst seasons of his Red Sox career by far. And while he ended the season strong, his slow start was bad enough to result in an OPS under .800. His bat speed isn't what it used to be, he is striking out more than ever before, and he is clearly no longer the threatening presence in the lineup he was in years past. So diminished is his role with the Red Sox that there is media buzz about a short leash, with names like Jose Julio Ruiz and Adrian Gonzalez being thrown around as an insurance policy and replacement (respectively) should Ortiz not carry over his hot streak from the end of 2009. Certainly, it would take quite a lot to

convince the Red Sox to bring Ortiz back in 2010 on anything more than a 1-year contract, if even that -- a defenseless, declining DH is not exactly the ideal use for a roster spot.

If David Ortiz is fading, then Jason Varitek has vanished. After a decade of providing the Red Sox with leadership at and behind the plate, Tek has spent the last two seasons flirting with the Mendoza line and striking out on every high fastball thrown to him. And where Mario Mendoza was a slick defensive shortstop,

Varitek is showing his age

behind the plate. He still

maintains his game call-

ing ability and rapport with

much of the pitching staff, but he's even starting to lose some of the newcomers, as Clay Buchholz felt much more comfortable with Victor Martinez.

Tim Wakefield is the only player of the trio of veterans with more than 1 year on his contract. Ironically, this is the first time that has been the case in years, as the Sox and Wake decided to forego the perpetual \$4 million option in favor of a 2-year deal. The idea was to lower the annual spending slightly while giving Wakefield a shot at some team records. But as the 2010 season approaches, it's looking more likely that the situation could become slightly difficult, as Tim wants to be a starter on a team with a pretty well set rotation. Certainly injuries do occur, and Wake will get a chance to start at some point during the season, but at 44 years old, the 17 wins he would need to tie Clemens and Cy Young for the team record could seem out of reach. It's not at all inconceivable that Wake could decide that the record is out of reach, and call it quits during or after just this season. Even if he doesn't, it would be incredibly surprising if 2011 was not his last year. Within two years' time, the 2004 Red Sox will have all left Boston.

Fifteen years ago, Tim Wakefield started in my first game at Fenway Park. We faced the Seattle Mariners, with Ken Griffey Jr. (my sports hero at

*‘Within two years’ time,  
the 2004 Red Sox will  
have all left Boston.’*



the time alongside Michael Jordan), and lost 6-4. Eight years later, I would watch him serve up a season-ending home run to Aaron Boone when just an hour earlier we had seemed on our way to the World Series.

One year later, I would watch him blank the Yankees in the 12th, 13th, and 14th innings of game 5, allowing David Ortiz to get a walk off single, just one night after he had launched a 2-run walk off shot off Yankee reliever Paul Quantrill. Those were just 2 of 17 game-ending hits by Papi, who will forever be known as one of the most clutch players in the history of the game.

And what can be said of the captain, Jason Varitek? As hard as it can be to remember when we're watching him swing and miss at high fastballs, Tek provided us with strong offense at what was often an offensively bankrupt position for years, and did so without sacrificing anything behind the plate. There are few who have ever been able to call a game as well as Jason Varitek, who has caught four no-hitters, more than any other catcher in baseball history (it would be five if Curt hadn't shaken him off that one time).

Still, the Red Sox will remain the Red Sox. The young heroes of 2007 have become the new core of the team for 2010 and beyond as the older members have faded and left. The rookie of the year became an MVP, the up-and-coming lefty became the team's ace, and Kevin Youkilis has spent the last two years as the team's best hitter. As strange as it may be, we will soon get used to a Red Sox team without Ortiz, Varitek, and Wakefield just as we got used to one without Pedro or Manny.

But with 2004 being the landmark season it was, with the World Series meaning so much to every single Red Sox fan, these next two years will put a bookend on one of the greatest eras in Red Sox history. May the next one be so successful.

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*Ben Buchanan is an editor at OverTheMonster.com.*

# ***Will John Lackey's Right Arm Hold Up?***

*By Troy Patterson*

The right arm of John Lackey has been a problem recently and has caused him to no longer be viewed as a work horse pitcher. When signing with the Red Sox, his contract had to be worked for a recurrence of an arm injury that causes extensive time lost, which could be grounds to make the final season only pay the league minimum. Will his elbow continue to be a problem and how has it affected him so far?

From 2003-2007 John Lackey totaled 1053 IP for an average of 210.6 per season. He then suffered from a strain of the right triceps in spring training of 2008 and ended up spending 53 days on the DL to start the season. Then again in 2009 he had inflammation in his triceps and spent 50 days on the DL. He was still able to total an average of 170 IP in those two seasons, but not the numbers he had been known for previously.

In 2008 after returning from the DL, his numbers continued a steady decline that had been started in 2005, as his K/9 rate of 7.16 was down a long way from his peak of 8.57. That shouldn't be a huge concern as that was more of a fluke year and his career rate was nearly identical at 7.20. He had one of his best walk rates in 2008 at 2.20 and a very good K/BB of 3.25.

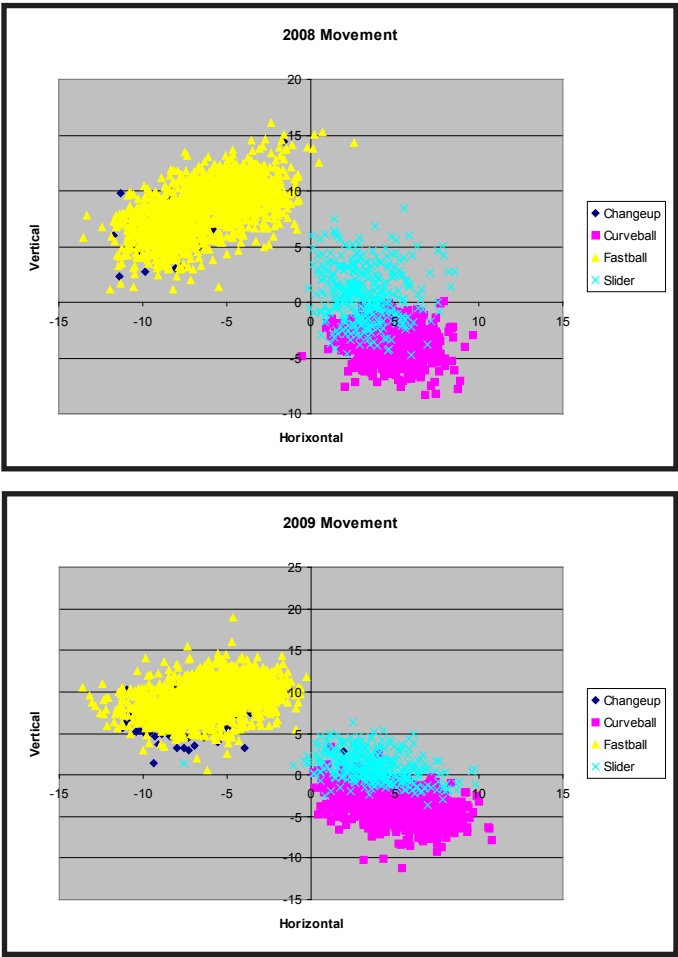
He did struggle with the home run that year, but his other numbers balanced him out and he had a solid season in limited time. He was struggling with his pitching though as his velocity was at a low of 90.7 and had a run value of -0.19 for every 100 fastballs thrown.

This is a mixed bag as he was getting good results, but did have signs of trouble. If we move on to 2009 his fastball speed improved and so did its run value. His strikeouts only dropped slightly and his walks increased slightly. His results matched his career rates and he looked to be back to his

preinjury skill level.

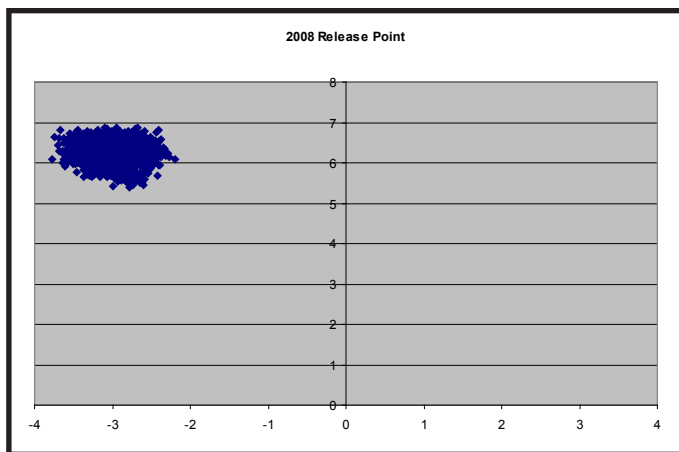
His ERA stood at 3.83 while his career rate is 3.81. He struck out 7.09 batters every nine innings and has a career rate of 7.20, while his walks were at 2.40 with a career level of 2.64. While his ERA was better in 2008 it seemed that his arm was much healthier after his DL stint in 2009 then in 2008.

The first place we could look is at his movement charts to see differences from 2008 to 2009. If you look below at his movement charts from each season there are some definite differences. His fastball in 2008 had less vertical movement, as the average was only 8.5 while in 2009 it was back up to 9.3 in vertical “rise”.

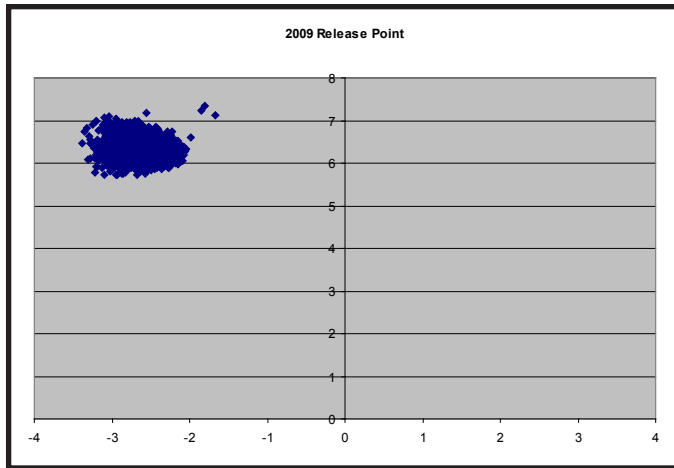


His slider was also much more random and spread out in 2008. Looking at run values it was a much better pitch in 2009 going from a  $-0.75$  to a  $0.16$  value every 100 pitches. There isn't enough pitch f/x data from before these two seasons to get an accurate picture of where his movement was before 2008, but I think based on the results his 2009 is probably a better expectation of where he was before.

I also base this on his pitch release points. This is something you'll have to look closer at the next two graphs, but notice in 2008 his release point circle was between 5.5 and 7 vertically and  $-2.5$  and  $-3.75$  horizontally.



In 2009 though the circle moves up and to the right. That means he is coming with a higher delivery at between 6 and 7 vertically and  $-2$  and  $-3.25$  horizontally. A drop in release point is usually a sign of arm discomfort and the drop relieves the pressure on the arm. (See graph on the next page.)



Based on this I think Lackey was hurt for most of 2008 even after his DL stint. His results were solid though so the Angels I'm sure had no reason to take him out of the rotation. This is why the injury continued in 2009 and took more rest.

I spoke to Corey Dawkins who wrote of injury warning flags in the [2010 Hardball Times Annual](#). He said he thinks the Red Sox have reason to believe Lackey is a better bet to stay healthy compared to Josh Beckett.

*"Beckett's injury history suggests that there is instability somewhere in his throwing motion. He's got not only the neuritis but also repeated issues with his core (obliques, low back). Neuritis usually occurs when the ulnar nerve is stretched out during the throwing. This can often occur when the elbow is loose that's why so many Tommy John players also have their ulnar nerve moved at the same time*

*Now Lackey from the reports I saw show inflammation in the posterior elbow which usually isn't a result of instability but more muscular fatigue and overuse of the triceps what happens is the triceps pulls on the bone at the microscopic level and over time "stretches" the bone into a spur like silly putty."*

That spur can be cleaned up in a quick surgery and if done in the off-season would require no DL time. While it looks like his 2009 was healthy

this injury could return again when the spur fully develops. The team I'm sure will be watching things like velocity and release points to be proactive on any future injuries, but it appears Lackey could return to the work horse from 2003-2007, which I'm sure we would all like to see.

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*Troy Patterson is runs RotoSavants.com and writes for HardballTimes.com and FireBrandAl.com.*

# **‘We F--ckin’ Won!’: The Greatest Red Sox Game I Ever Attended**

*by Red*

My Dad took me to my first ballgame at Fenway when I was ten years old. And I’ve still got two things from that day.

One is the well-worn, dog-eared program he bought me, which still has his pencil-marked scorecard tucked neatly inside.

The other is the indelible memory of walking up that ramp and seeing for the very first time that explosion of deep blue sky and dark green grass that slaps little shavers (and shavettes) upside the



PHOTO BY BILL MORLOCK

**Pedro Martinez**

head and says, “Forget everything you’ve learned to this moment. Life for you begins now.”

Since that day, I’ve made the trek up that concrete ramp at least a hundred times, and every time, I’m that bucktoothed 10-year-old kid again. It never gets old.

Things change. Friends grow up and move away. Robots take your job. But Fenway’s always there for you. That green wall. That red seat. Pesky’s Pole. These are good things.

Last summer, I had the privilege of playing on the field at Fenway



during a charity event. (Actually, it was more like running blindly after fly balls in a fit of apoplexy, but you get the point.) Throughout the entire afternoon, I just stood there, jaw agape, staring blankly into the stands, feeling it all come back to me.

Over there was where Dad and I sat during that very first game.

And there's where me and the guys had a few too many and started the "strike" chant toward the close of the abbreviated 1994 season. And there's where I sat during that infamous date with Karrie Wexler, "The Hingham Vacuum." And there were the bleacher seats Dad & I sat in for the single greatest game I

*'Dad got the tickets, because that's what Dad did. He just waved his hands like some goddam illusionist and suddenly --bam!--there were playoff tickets.'*

ever saw at Fenway: Game 3 of the 2003 ALDS against the Oakland A's.

Dad got the tickets, because that's what Dad did. He just waved his hands like some goddam illusionist and suddenly—bam!—there were playoff tickets.

I remember it was cold. Way too cold for October. And we were sitting in the bleachers, which I found surprisingly more accommodating of my goofy-ass 6'2" frame than the grandstands. Not that it really mattered; I don't think anyone sat down for a single minute. Because we'd already dropped the first two in Oakland and we all knew this could be the end. The last time we got to see Pedro and Nomar and Mueller and Millar in action. So we stood. And we screamed. And we begged for something magical to happen so we could all tune in again tomorrow. That communal vibe was in effect. People passing around bottles. Strangers high-fiving strangers on every hit and enemy strikeout.

And did I mention that we stood up, for like the whole game? Because we did.

Thankfully, Oakland was in a giving mood. Because what could have been a season-crushing rally in the sixth went awry when Eric “Spicoli” Byrnes missed home plate after colliding with Tek, then felt compelled to restore a little testosterone to his reserve tank by coming after Tek to shove him back. Tagged. Owned. There’s your seat on the bench, pally, and thanks for coming. A bit later, practically the same thing happened again, with Miggy Tejada running into Mueller while rounding third, then stopping to bitch about it before hitting home plate. Here’s your tag. And there’s your seat.

*‘And it kept coming toward us. Closer. Closer. Closer. Bang. ... Suddenly, there was a tomorrow.’*

“It’s all going our way,” I told Dad. And he agreed. And we sat there, munching popcorn and swilling hot chocolate and without saying a word, the two of us realized that walking into Fenway Park was like going through a friggin’ time vortex. No matter how old I got, when we passed through those gates, I was a goddam ten year old kid, grabbing my dad’s hand and pointing at the players and the lights and the wall and getting all swept up in everything. And it was awesome.

Even though the whole thing was knotted up at 1-1, I had a weird -- and at that time, quite rare -- feeling that it was all ours. And when Trot came up to pinch hit in the bottom of the eleventh, the last thing I was expecting was a miracle. I just wanted contact. Anything. Get on base and get the rally going.

And then he hit it. And it kept coming toward us. Closer. Closer. Closer.

Bang.

Cue madness. Cue “Dirty Water.” Cue screaming college chicks and

grandpas and kids on their dads' shoulders. Suddenly, there was a tomorrow. And everything was right in our world again.

On the way out, Dad and I were walking alongside a drunk girl shouting into her cell phone, "We f--kin' won!" I smiled and told him that *that* was the single greatest game I ever attended.

And it was.

Dad's not here anymore, but the memory stays. And even though it all ended in a trainwreck in the Bronx just a couple weeks later, I wouldn't have traded a moment.

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*Red runs SurvivingGrady.com.*

# **Down on the Farm**

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*An in-depth look at the Red Sox's farm system,  
including the team's drafting philosophy and  
Over the Monster's top 20 prospects, as decided  
by the OTM community.*



PHOTO BY KELLY O'CONNOR / SITTINGSTILL.NET

**Ryan Kalish**

# ***The Philosophy Behind Theo Epstein's Madness***

***By Ben Buchanan***

When Theo Epstein came to Boston, he made it clear that his goal was to base the Red Sox around the farm system. The “\$100 million player development machine” is what he called it. Theo’s first great success—the championship season of 2004—came before he could truly put his system in place, relying instead on the exploitation of the undervalued stat of OBP. Since then, however, the team has begun to rely more and more on the farm system that Theo envisioned, with the 2007 championship season arguably being as much or more a result of the new (Pedroia, Ellsbury, Youkilis, Pa-

pelbon) than the old (Ramirez and Ortiz).

As Theo has built this organization, it is clear that he has been working with a definite sense of what he wants done, and how he wants to do it. When dealing with free agency, he sets a price the team is willing to spend on a player, and if that won't get it done, they walk. When dealing with trades, there are certain parts of the organization that are simply off limits. He has been known to err, particularly when dealing with his occasional odd obsession (Julio Lugo), but generally he will stick to his guns, and the team is better for it. His treatment of the farm system is no different. In all aspects of the development of the minor leagues, Theo has a clear plan—a philosophy, if you will—that dictates the direction of the farm system.

### *Theo and Player Acquisitions*

The philosophy starts at the draft, where “high ceiling, high volume, and high price” has been Theo's mantra. In the last 7 drafts, the Red Sox have signed 77 out of 81 picks from the first 10 rounds. In just the 2002 and 2001 drafts (the last two before Theo's arrival), the Sox allowed a 10th, 7th, 2nd, and a pair of 6th round picks walk away without signing. In 1998, they semi-infamously let Mark Teixeira walk after drafting him in the 9th round.

This is made all the more impressive by the type of players Theo picks. In order to get the best players possible despite drafting towards the end of the order year after year, Theo aims for the guys passed over by other teams for “signability” reasons. Both because of bonus demands (Lars Anderson) and strong college commitments (Casey Kelly, Ryan Westmoreland), these are the players that other teams decided not to risk a draft pick on in fear that they would walk away empty handed.

As a result, the Red Sox have consistently been amongst the top spenders in the draft up until very recently, when the price of the very top picks in the draft ballooned. Still, the Sox spent the 2nd greatest amount compared to what they would be expected to pay based on slot (recom-

mended) prices, spending 191% of the slot price in the first 10 rounds. While the idea of spending a lot to get talent may seem like something that only a Red Sox or Yankees fan would tout as a strategy, it's important to look at what's actually being spent. The Nationals set a record last year by spending just over \$11 million on their draft. When compared with prices in free agency, these are actually fairly miniscule amounts, especially given the sheer amount of talent that can be provided. For their part, the Red Sox have built their system while spending \$10 million only once (2008).

*'All of this goes toward filling up the system with a large number of players who can, one day, play for the Boston Red Sox. And that is the goal for the Red Sox' draftees.'*

Typically, their drafts sit around \$5-7 million a year.

More indicative of the team's wealth, though, is their participation in International Free Agency. While they did not sign the biggest international name of this last offseason in Aroldis Chapman, the Red Sox did manage to spend more than \$8 million on a combination of Jose Iglesias and Jose Vinicio. This is the 4th straight year where the Sox have signed an international free agent prospect to a 7-figure bonus, starting with the unique case of Daisuke Matsuzaka in the 2006-2007 offseason. While so far the big-ticket international free agents have arguably paid off less than the cheaper mass purchases, which have produced talent like Hanley Ramirez (signed for \$20,000 in 2000), Yamaico Navarro (\$20,000 in 2005), and Stolmy Pimentel (signed for \$25,000 in 2006), the investment by Theo in the international market has and will continue to pay dividends. (Logan Lietz takes a deeper look at international free agency in his piece "A Taxing Trend in International Signings" on page \_\_)

The Red Sox are also not opposed to using their wealth to pick up



extra draft picks in the early rounds, either. While the free agency compensation system where a team is given early draft picks when they lose productive players to free agency is supposed to create competitive balance, the Red Sox have learned to exploit it to near perfection. That trade for Victor Martinez looks even better when you consider that Victor Martinez will likely bring the Red Sox two top-50 picks should he choose to leave next year. Adrian Beltre's 1-year deal will not only provide the Red Sox with top defense for a year, but also a supplemental pick at the end of the first round. This year, the Sox managed to not only dodge punitive measures for having signed two type-A free agents (John Lackey and Marco Scutaro), but actually improved their original draft standing. They replaced their second round pick and added a supplemental pick by letting Jason Bay go to the Mets.

But the most brilliant move by Theo involving this system came last year with the acquisition of Billy Wagner. By trading 2 non-prospects in Chris Carter and Eddie Lora, and agreeing to pay the rest of Wagner's salary for the year, Theo not only received a top reliever for the playoff run (this one actually panned out), but also two high-value picks in compensation. This was clearly Theo's intention from the beginning, as the Sox were refusing to make the deal unless Wagner would allow them to offer him arbitration (a requirement to receive compensation).

All of this goes toward filling up the system with a large number of players who can one day play for the Boston Red Sox. And that is the goal for all Red Sox' draftees. As a team which spends as much money as it does to fill up its major league roster, the Red Sox don't have a lot of need for guys who are just average major league regulars. They can afford to pass up on MLB readiness or safe picks in order to stock their system deep with big tools and big potential. As a result, the Sox may be more prone to having their top-10 picks end up doing nothing, but when they hit, they hit big. For a team that doesn't need to fill 75% of its roster spaces with cheap talent, hitting it big every-so-often is much more valuable than getting 3 or 4 slightly

above replacement level players. It's this focus on top-tier talent that guides how the Red Sox work in trades as well.

### *Theo Epstein and Trades*

In 2007, it was Johan Santana. "Trade Jon Lester," they cried, "He's just a prospect! Santana is a Cy Young winner!"

In 2009, it was Adrian Gonzalez. "We don't know if Casey Kelly or Ryan Westmoreland will ever do anything!" "Clay Buchholz isn't a sure thing!"

Ironically enough, these are often the words of the very same people who would encourage Theo and the front office to empty the farm system for one Hanley Ramirez. How soon we forget.

Since Theo Epstein took over as General Manager, the Boston Red Sox have actually not been as reluctant as some might think to trade top-of-the-system talent. In 2003, Theo shipped Freddy Sanchez off to Pittsburgh for Jeff Suppan and Brandon Lyon. Sanchez, a Duquette draftee, was coming off a AAA season where he managed an OPS of .923, thanks largely in part to a .411 BABIP. Since leaving Boston, Sanchez has been a strong defensive second baseman, managing an All-Star trip when, once again, his BABIP ballooned in 2006.

In 2004, Theo flipped Brandon Lyon along with another Duquette signing in Jorge De La Rosa for Curt Schilling. Since then, Lyon has had an on-off career as a setup man, while De La Rosa is working in the middle of Colorado's rotation.

In 2006, less than 2 months after acquiring him for Edgar Renteria, the Red Sox flipped Andy Marte along with Kelly Shoppach and Guillermo Mota for Coco Crisp. At the time, Marte was considered one of the top prospects in the country (ranked 14th by Baseball America). As of now, Marte is looking like a AAAA player, as he has struggled to find his place in the majors despite having 668 at bats over the last 5 years. Last year he had an

OPS of .693 in 175 plate appearances.

And, of course, in 2005 Hanley Ramirez was traded along with Anibal Sanchez and Harvey Garcia for Josh Beckett, Mike Lowell, and Guillermo Mota (who was, as mentioned earlier, flipped for Coco Crisp). I don't need to tell anyone about what Hanley has done. What is important is that this trade was made by Ben Cherington and Jed Hoyer when they were co-General Managers during Theo Epstein's short absence, and it is the one trade of the group that goes against Theo's philosophy.

While they may have been at the top of the Red Sox organization when they were traded—and they were good prospects in their own right—both Sanchez and De La Rosa are examples of the “safe” guys. They were very likely to make the majors, very likely to contribute there, but not very likely to set the world on fire. While Andy Marte might seem like a break with the philosophy, remember that Theo was not involved in his acquisition (the Renteria trade also came during the short Cherington-Hoyer administration), so his opinion on him may have been drastically different from the mainstream—and if so, he appears to have been right.

Hanley Ramirez, on the other hand, is most definitely an impact player. Baseball America ranked him as the top Red Sox prospect for three-straight years, and had him in the top-40 nationally from 2003-2006. Theo had made no move to trade him despite mostly middling statistics in the minors, though clearly he had a great deal of value given the returns that came almost immediately after Epstein left. Never before had Theo been willing to trade a young talent of his level, and he has never done so since.

Depending on what rumors you believe, Theo may have made offers involving his top prospects in the past. Packages involving any number of combinations of Lester, Buchholz, and Ellsbury surrounded Johan Santana. Buchholz was again tossed around after a bad 2008 in talks for a young catcher (though in this case, all signs pointed towards him being completely off limits). In 2009, the Seattle Times reported that Theo had sent a list of

5 players including Clay Buchholz and Daniel Bard to the Mariners, telling them they could pick 5 for Felix Hernandez (who is reportedly one of Theo's obsessions. Good luck with that now). Most recently, and perhaps least concretely of all, were the talks for Adrian Gonzalez, where Theo either offered nobody, or Buchholz, or one of Kelly and Westmoreland, or a bunch of mid-range guys depending on who you ask. But whatever the veracity of these rumors, and however serious any of these conversations got, it's telling that none of them ever got done (especially given the package that the Twins ended up with for Santana). And if Theo did not have reason to stick with his guys before, he certainly does now. Lester has emerged as one of the best lefties in the game, and Buchholz came back from a down 2008 to show a good deal of his old promise in 2009. Certainly it remains to be seen how good Kelly and Westmoreland will be, but given the Sox' track record, Theo can't be too worried.

With the top-tier for the most part off limits, this is where the Red Sox' depth comes into play. Like most other teams looking to make play-off runs, the Red Sox have, at times, been in need of a mid-season trade. In 2007, they went after Eric Gagne, trading mid-level names like Kason Gabbard, David Murphy, and Engel Beltre. In 2009, they acquired Victor Martinez for Justin Masterson, Nick Hagadone, and Bryan Price. Of those 6 names, Nick Hagadone is the most likely to end up reaching an All-Star type of level. Justin Masterson will certainly have a good career, but again, did not have a role on the stacked Red Sox. In return for 6 guys without much chance to make an impact at the majors with the Sox, Theo acquired a top-of-the-line reliever (yes, he turned out to be awful, but he came in with a 2.16 ERA on the season and as one of the best relievers of the last decade) and one of the best offensive catchers in the league.

So what's the upshot of all this? Unfortunately for trade rumor enthusiasts, this means that Red Sox fans can probably count themselves out when it comes to the biggest deals. If a team demands top impact talent,

then chances are that Theo will not bite. This will earn the ire of fans in 2010 and 2011 just as it did in 2007 and 2009, but if it means keeping talents like Lester, then Theo can rest easy. If he is not vindicated by history every time, these last few years of production out of home-grown players suggests he will come out on top more often than not. At the same time, Red Sox fans can rest assured that the team will not hesitate to make the smart moves when they have little to lose, and that they will not be forced to look at another Hanley Ramirez and say “Well, we could’ve seen that one coming.”

*Theo Epstein and  
Reaping the Rewards*

It would be easy to just point to the 2007 World Series trophy and rest my case.

But that’s not all there is to it.

When Sox fans go into an off-

season, they’re often looking for a big free agent acquisition. After 2008, the name on everyone’s mind was Mark Teixeira. Having come out of that long, torturous fiasco empty handed, many were ready to call that offseason a failure. But Theo turned his focus elsewhere, and managed to turn that year into what I would consider the most productive one in years.

On December 3rd, Theo locked up Dustin Pedroia through 2015. On January 15th, Youkilis signed through 2012. Jon Lester followed suit with a 5-year contract on March 8th. In 2009, the trio was worth \$76.8 million based on Fangraphs’ valuations. The average cost of those players over the course of their contracts is \$23 million. In free agency, it would likely be at least twice that. Jacoby Ellsbury was worth \$8.4 million, and may as well have cost nothing to the Red Sox that year. Daniel Bard and Clay Buchholz each made contributions of their own, and are set to do even more this year at a cost of less than \$1 million combined.

*‘But in everything but  
the absolute worst-case  
scenario ... the Red Sox  
have made their old  
ceiling their new floor.’*

What does all this cheap talent do? For a small market team, it could make them contenders for a few years. For the Red Sox, it provides consistency. In 2009, the Red Sox had three deadweight contracts in David Ortiz, Mike Lowell, and Julio Lugo. The first two provided some value, but not nearly enough for what they were paid. Thanks to getting so much for so little from their homegrown players, the team was able to eat over 25 percent of its payroll and still win 95 games in the best division in baseball. And those costs aren't changing much (aside from Ellsbury). In 2012, when the best prospects in the Sox System right now are ready to go, Lester, Youkilis, and Pedroia will still be producing just as much for just as little, the Red Sox payroll will hopefully be back toward 100 percent, and they'll have even more cheap guys coming in. What can that freed up money go to? Changing Marco Scutaro into Hanley Ramirez? David Ortiz into Miguel Cabrera?

Okay, maybe not quite that. These are absolutely extremes, and certainly plans could be derailed by having big signings go bad, taking up that 25 percent again. Guys get injured, things go wrong, and prospects turn out to be busts. This coming year turned into a "bridge year" partly because Lars Anderson didn't show up to produce a .900+ OPS like we had hoped. Maybe Westmoreland turns out to be injury prone or Kelly can't match up to major league talent. But in everything but the absolute worst-case scenario where everything goes wrong at once, the Red Sox have made their old ceiling into their new floor. It's hard to imagine a scenario where the Sox are not at least contending for the next five years, and it's easy to conceive scenarios where they are World Series favorites year-in and year-out. The more cheap talent you have, the more you can spend on big name free agents, and the more stacked your team becomes. It's as simple as that.

### *Everyone Not Named Theo*

While Theo is the man at the helm, running a baseball team is obviously not a one-man job. Especially when talking about a farm system, it's

impossible to give too much credit to the scouts and the directors. David Chadd and Jason McLeod have led a team of scouts which has done a fantastic job of identifying talent like Papelbon, Pedroia, and Buchholz. For all that Theo gives them the resources to make the right choices, the Red Sox have an impressive success rate with late first-round and supplemental draft picks. Mike Hazen has done a fantastic job of keeping the system running smoothly. It's not enough to just throw a lot of money at the system, you have to have the people to spend it wisely, and then protect the investments, and the Red Sox have done that throughout.

With the departure of Jed Hoyer, Theo Epstein's Assistant GM, and Jason McLeod to San Diego, the Sox could be in need of another few good men. But the team has been as good at evaluating executive talent as they are with baseball talent, and things should continue moving along smoothly, all according to Theo Epstein's plan.

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*Ben Buchanan is an editor at OverTheMonster.com.*





PHOTO BY KELLY O'CONNOR / SITTINGSTILL.NET

*Junichi Tazawa*

# ***A Taxing Trend in International Signings***

*by Logan Lietz*

International Scouting is a rather contemporary ideology in the Major League Baseball community -- the Red Sox included. Just as Boston's front offices begin to perfect the way that they approach the amateur draft, now seemingly finding success annually, they continue to evolve in an ongoing attempt at perfecting the way in which they scout internationally.

Often times an organization's success in relation to discovering and signing talent internationally tends to be interwoven with their ability to draft profitably. But make no mistake about it, the two are entirely separate entities--something that the Red Sox have become all too familiar with.

While the Fenway-faithful have grown accustomed to positive draft results in recent years, just how successful has the international scouting department actually been, comparatively speaking?

Prior to this year's installment, the Red Sox's annual Rookie Program had never featured more than two foreign-born prospects at one time. This year, however, six of the 12 attendees were born overseas; a fact indicative of the increased concentration on international scouting.

The recent increase in appeal to foreign-born players that accompanies signing with Boston is based on the premise that the organization is more apt to provide the necessary means for one to grow accustomed to life in America, and in turn, Major League Baseball. Junichi Tazawa summed it up best when he recently said, "It was explained to me that the Red Sox would have a very good support system for international players, and once I got in, it was exactly like it was explained. I feel like it was the right decision to sign with them."

"It was Spanish five years ago; now we have English, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese -- as these things grow, we need to provide the resources to help the players who need those resources," said Mike Hazen, director of Player Development.

However, at what point can the sum of those resources be considered excessive, or perhaps even problematic?

A brief glance at the growing number of the internationally-signed prospects within the system suggests vast improvement. However, closer examination of the simultaneous increase in finances allocated to international signings--and the subsequent success had by Boston--forces even the most biased members of "Red Sox Nation" to reconsider prematurely declaring there being substantial evidence of positive progression.

With growing emphasis being placed on internal development nowadays, Boston has chosen to adhere greater diligence--as well as financial allocation--toward using the international pipeline as a way to stockpile

young talent. Not coincidentally, the increasing number of internationally-born prospects in the system is only paralleled by the rising dollar amount awarded each year in relative signing bonuses.

The total amount directed towards free agent talent via overseas is not necessarily the most unsettling trend. The truly prominent issue is the irregularity in the resulting return relative to the annually increasing investment in bonuses--especially the sum directed towards young and unrefined talent.

The total amount of signing bonuses has seen a consistent increase the last decade or so, rising approximately \$8.5 million since 2004-05. Statistics such as this are hard to ignore, leading some to believe that much of Boston's success can seemingly be attributed to such a prevalent increase in spending--as the previous problem of inconsistency remains apparent.

Current prospects Oscar Perez and Michael Almanzar are two prime examples of the team's tendency to overspend for unrefined overseas prospects.

Eighteen year-old catcher Oscar Perez was signed out of Venezuela in 2008 with a signing bonus of \$712,500. While most would agree that Perez is advanced defensively as an eighteen year-old, his offensive skills are still defined as very raw and lacking in potential. In 52 games with the GSL Red Sox in 2009, Perez hit just .210 and posted a 2.4/1 strikeout to walk ratio. Most Venezuelan scouts project Perez's ceiling as a back-up catcher at the major league level. Boston on the other hand considers him to be amongst the "upper-echelon of the catchers who signed [in 2008]." It remains to be seen whose prediction will ultimately be more accurate--and in turn, whether or not designating over \$700,000 upon signing Perez was justified.

In 2007, Michael Almanzar received \$1.5 million dollars when he signed with the Red Sox as a sixteen year-old out of the Dominican Republic. Despite playing very limited organized baseball prior to his time with the Red Sox, Almanzar offered a glimpse of his potential during a short stint

in the GCL (.348 average in 23 games), before ultimately being promoted to Greenville. However, in his subsequent time in the system as a part of Greenville [Drive] and Lowell [Spinners], Almanzar has hit just .216, striking out every 3.8 AB. A quick look at the scouting report offered via SoxProspects.com makes it easy to see why this particular signing has already garnered a considerable amount of scrutiny:

“Tall, lanky third baseman, extremely athletic but raw. Presently very thin, but has room to add muscle and strength. Signed at the age of 16 but hadn’t played much organized ball prior, despite being the son of former MLB pitcher Carlos Almanzar. Has a ton of potential offensively, showed off present tools by dominating the GCL during a short stint in 2008. Struggled against more advanced pitching - especially against off-speed pitches - after skipping a level to Greenville later that season. Overall, approach is advanced in some places and raw in others. Fidgets in the batter’s box, has an open stance that tightens up a lot after a big timing step. Generates a lot of bat speed and has plus power potential. Has some balance issues, but has a smooth swing with fluid movement. His speed on the basepaths is average-to-below-average. Also a work-in-progress on defense. Has improved with the glove, but still plays the field more on instinct than instruction. Can be indecisive on grounders and long hops. Arm is very strong, has displayed accuracy throwing to second base, but can be erratic trying to make close plays at first. Footwork also needs improvement, but the tools are there. Can be an above-average defensive player with continued instruction, but some scouts believe he may be better suited at first base. There have been some concerns about attitude and lack of motivation.”

Aside from the lack of growth to this point in his still young career, his scouting report is littered with as much negative potential as there is positive. Another unrefined talent that--despite being highly touted initially--has yet to show the substantial signs of development that would warrant such an immense signing bonus.

On the other hand, the Red Sox's track record in international signings is not entirely comprised of overpaid disappointments. However, this is where the enigmatic element of inconsistency comes in.

In retrospect, the above signings seem that much more frustrating when you compare their progression and signing bonuses to those of a couple other notable foreign-born acquisitions.

In July of 2006 the Red Sox signed 17-year-old pitcher Stolmy Pimentel out of the Dominican Republic with a signing bonus of just \$25,000.

In Pimentel's first three seasons with Boston

(2007 DSL, 2008 Lowell, 2009 Greenville), the

right-hander compiled an 18-9 record through

47 starts to go along with a 3.41 ERA in 242+

innings pitched. With an 8.3/2.5 strikeout-

to-walk ratio [per nine innings pitched] and a

1.06 WHIP collectively, Pimentel has already

established himself as one of the most promis-

ing young arms in the system. Despite having just recently turned twenty

years of age, Pimentel is ranked amongst the organization's top ten prospects,

and is developing into the kind of bargain buy that Boston's international

scouting department can be proud of.

Hanley Ramirez, signed out of the Dominican Republic by the Red

Sox in July of 2000 (at age 18), has established himself as one of the elite

players in Major League Baseball today. In his first four full seasons in the

MLB, the 25 year-old has averaged roughly 193 hits, 118 runs, 78 RBI, 41

steals, and 26 home runs, to go along with a .316 batting average--all while

playing on a generally sub-par Florida Marlins team. Ramirez won the

Rookie of the Year in 2006, is a two-time All-Star game selection (2008,

2009), and has finished among the top ten in National League MVP voting

on two separate occasions (10th- 2007, 2nd- 2009). All of those accolades

considered, it may come as a surprise that Hanley's signing bonus with the

*'Is the resulting success simply a by-product of an increase in spending?'*

Red Sox in 2000 was just \$20,000. When compared to other international signings--such as the aforementioned Oscar Perez and Michael Almanzar--Ramirez represents one of the most poignant examples of a misallocation of funding [relative to return].

The aforementioned examples merely offer a fragmented glimpse of an unsettling trend that--likely due to the organization's financial resources--has gone widely unnoticed by those less-privy to the situation.

So, with such a direct correlation between the rising investments and subsequent success in relation to the Red Sox's international endeavors, the obvious question becomes: Is the resulting success simply a by-product of an increase in spending?

The preceding theory is made more justifiable when you consider that the six foreign-born attendees at this year's Red Sox Rookie Program collectively averaged \$1.4 million dollars in signing bonuses alone--a sum that had never been awarded to any individual international signing prior to Daisuke Matsuzaka (2007). While that number is undoubtedly skewed by Jose Iglesias' \$6 million bonus, it is essentially superseded by Randor Bierd and Che-Hsuan Lin's combined bonuses of just \$20,000 -- yet another reaffirmation of that problematic inconsistency.

As it was alluded to earlier--thanks in large part to the organization's financial allowances and amateur draft successes--the topical trend of a misallocation in funding (relative to the resulting returns) has been widely overlooked by the casual observer. However, as the dollar amount proliferates, so to does the aggregated attention toward the issue.

In the event that international spending continues to experience substantial burgeoning, a failure to increase efficiency in spending will prove detrimental to even the most financially stable organization -- yes, even the Red Sox.

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PHOTO BY KELLY O'CONNOR / SITTINGSTILL.NET

**Lars Anderson, No. 8 prospect at John Sickels' [MinorLeagueBall.com](http://MinorLeagueBall.com)**

# Sox a 'Powerhouse' for Player Development

*by John Sickels*

About 15 years ago, it was commonly said that the worst nightmare of the smaller-revenue clubs was for a larger-revenue club to devote massive resources to improving the farm system, rather than just spending money on free agents, as was more traditional in the 70's and 80s. Since the accession of Theo Epstein as Boston General Manager in 2002, the Red Sox have become the player development powerhouse long-feared by other teams.

"It's definitely deliberate," Red Sox farm director Mike Hazen told me in a January interview, "this is definitely something we are doing con-

sciously. When Theo took over the team, back in his initial press conference on day one, Theo said that building a player development machine was his main vision ... the first task of everyone in the farm system, from front office guys down to the coaches and managers and scouts, is to draft, sign, and develop impact talent.”

The Red Sox have been highly aggressive in the draft in recent years, signing prospects for above-slot bonuses. They’ve also become increasingly forceful on the international market, and the combination of the two factors has given them a system with both depth and breadth. They’ve shown the willingness to go after both college and high school talent, and usually draft a mixture of players with both athletic upside and strong present skills.

Here is my take on the top 25 prospects in the Red Sox system. Overall, the organization lacks sure-fire superstars, but has a huge mass of solid prospects, some of whom could develop much further. More information about these players, plus over 1,000 others from the other 29 organizations, can be found in the *2010 Baseball Prospect Book*, available only at [Johnsickels.net](http://Johnsickels.net). Also check out [minorleagueball.com](http://minorleagueball.com) for daily analysis and reports on prospects and rookies.

**1) Ryan Westmoreland, OF:** Hazen says that Westmoreland is “a marvelous athlete” but also “very refined for his age.” Blessed with speed, power potential, and on-base ability, he hit .296/.401/.484 with 19 steals in 19 attempts in the New York-Penn League last year. We need to see him at higher levels, but he’s drawn comparisons to a young Jacoby Ellsbury with more pop in his bat.

**2) Casey Kelly, RHP:** Kelly split last year between pitching and shortstop duties for Class A Greenville, but is a full-time moundsman entering ’10. He has good command of three pitches (88-93 MPH fastball, curve, changeup) and is very athletic, with more velocity possible as he matures.



**3) Ryan Kalish, OF:** Another player with multiple skills, Kalish hit .271/.341/.440 in Double-A last year with 14 steals in 17 attempts but is capable of more. He has a broad base of talent including strong plate discipline and should be ready for a trial late in 2010.

**4) Josh Reddick, OF:** Reddick showed significant power by hitting 13 homers in 63 games for Double-A Portland last year, but struggled with the strike zone during trials in Triple-A and in Boston. Scouts love his tools but he still has work to do refining his skills.

**5) Michael Bowden, RHP:** Bowden doesn't project as an ace, but he should eat innings with at least average performance, throwing strikes with his 88-92 MPH fastball, curve, slider, and changeup. His control slipped a bit last year, but he doesn't have much left to prove in the minors.

**6) Junichi Tazawa, RHP:** Like Bowden, Tazawa throws strikes with solid stuff but doesn't project as a genuine ace, looking more like a future No. 3 starter. He'll begin '10 in Triple-A waiting for a major league call. He's better than his 7.47 ERA in Boston indicates.

**7) Anthony Rizzo, 1B:** Fully recovered from cancer, Rizzo has pushed ahead of Lars Anderson as the best first baseman in the system. A pure hitter with an excellent glove, Rizzo still has to show how much power he'll develop, but his career line of .308/.373/.457 is attractive.

**8) Lars Anderson, 1B:** Nagging injuries and lack of confidence contributed to Anderson's very disappointing '10 season. The Red Sox think he'll rebound, and he needs to do so quickly to retain his status on this list, given the depth behind him in the organization.

**9) Raymond Fuentes, OF:** A tremendous athlete, Fuentes has at least 70 speed on the traditional 20-80 scale. He has a slashing swing but needs to improve his plate discipline in order to maximize his Johnny Damon-like tools.

**11) Jose Iglesias, SS:** A Cuban defector, Iglesias features amazingly good defense at shortstop and terrific hand-eye coordination. Scouts aren't

sure about his bat, pointing to lack of power and doubts about his plate discipline, precluding a higher ranking until we get some professional data.

**11) Stolmy Pimentel, RHP:** Went 10-7, 3.82 with a 103/29 K/BB in 118 innings for Class-A Greenville, demonstrating excellent command of slightly above average stuff. He's projectable and could pick up additional velocity as he matures.

**12) Derrik Gibson, INF:** Gibson's combination of athleticism, speed, and plate discipline gave him a .290/.395/.380 line with 28 steals in 33 attempts for Lowell in the New York-Penn League. Any improvement in his power would push him up the list quickly.

**13) Luis Exposito, C:** Exposito features good power and solid, if erratic, defense behind the plate. Problems with strike zone judgment could hurt him against better pitching, but he should see the majors sometime late in '10 or in '11 if he continues at his current pace.

**14) David Renfroe, INF:** Drafted in the third round last June, Renfroe hasn't played yet but excites Boston officials with his outstanding athleticism and versatility. He should be much higher on the list next year of optimistic reports about his bat pan out.

**15) Alex Wilson, RHP:** A dominator at Texas A&M, Wilson has had some arm problems but can get his heater to 94 MPH and has an excellent slider. He posted a 0.50 ERA with a 33/7 K/BB in 36 innings in the New York-Penn League and could move through the system rapidly.

**16) Roman Mendez, RHP:** Mendez is another guy who could rank much higher next year, thanks to a 90-97 MPH fastball, a slider, and sharp command that gave him a 1.99 ERA with a 47/8 K/BB in 50 innings in the Gulf Coast Rookie League. He is a definite breakout candidate for 2010.

**17) Che-Hsuan Lin, OF:** Signed out of Taiwan in 2007, Lin is a terrific athlete with an excellent outfield glove. He hit .265/.355/.365 in the Carolina League and needs to show more oomph with the bat, but he draws walks and some scouts think the power will improve in time.

**18) Yamaico Navarro, SS:** A wrist injury plagued Navarro last year and stalled his development. When healthy, he features a quick bat with power potential and a strong throwing arm, though his range may be too limited for shortstop in the majors. He may end up as trade bait.

**19) Madison Younginer, RHP:** A seventh round pick last June, Younginer signed for a \$975,000 over-slot bonus and could have gone as high as the second round. He can hit 96 MPH but is raw mechanically and will need time to develop his arsenal.

**20) Stephen Fife, RHP:** A strike-throwing sinkerballer, Fife was bothered by a sore shoulder last year but was efficient on the mound, posting an 86/14 K/BB ratio in 88 A-ball innings. He projects as a fourth starter or long reliever in the majors.

**21) Kyle Weiland, RHP:** Weiland went 7-9, 3.46 with a 112/57 K/BB in 133 innings for Salem, showing inning-eating ability with his low-90s sinker and curve, and giving up just four homers. Like Fife, he projects as a fourth starter or reliever in the majors.

**22) Dustin Richardson, LHP:** The tall lefty boosted his fastball into the 90s last year and took well to a bullpen role after struggling as a starter in '08. His K/IP marks have always been strong, and he could fill a utility role in the Boston pen as soon as this year.

**23) Pete Hissey, OF:** Very athletic, Hissey is full of untapped potential. He hit .279/.356/.347 with 22 steals for Greenville last year, but the Red Sox think he'll show more pop as he gains experience.

**24) Eammon Portice, RHP:** A sleeper prospect, Portice has a deceptive delivery, a good sinker, and has racked up 265 strikeouts in 235 pro innings. He should move to Double-A in '10 and projects as a solid relief arm.

**25) Ryan Lavarney, C-DH:** Lavarney hit 36 doubles and 21 homers last year for Greenville and may have the best power in the system, but is rough with the glove and could be a born DH. He needs to make prog-

ress in '10 to avoid getting labeled as a minor league slugger.

***OTHERS:*** Michael Almanzar, 3B; Aaron Bates, OF; Drake Britton, LHP, Zach Daeges, OF; Ryan Dent, INF; Felix Doubront, LHP; Tim Federowicz, C; Jordan Flasher, RHP; Alex Hassan, OF; Brandon Jacobs, OF; Will Middlebrooks, 3B; Adam Mills, RHP; Daniel Nava, OF; Jason Rice, RHP; Manuel Rivera, LHP; Oscar Tejeda, SS; Kendal Volz, RHP; Mark Wagner, C; Fabian Williamson, LHP.

Overall, while the system could use some additional high-ceiling arms, there is a lot for Red Sox fans to look forward to.

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*John Sickels runs MinorLeagueBall.com.*

# Westmoreland on Fast Track to Fenway Park

by *Logan Lietz*

Even prior to being selected in the fifth round of the 2008 MLB Draft by the Boston Red Sox, Ryan Westmoreland had made a name for himself within the territorial confines of 'Red Sox Nation.' A graduate of Portsmouth High School (R.I.), Westmoreland played his prep career approximately 60 miles from Fenway Park -- the field that he himself grew up idolizing, and one that he hopes will ultimately become his home.



PHOTO BY KELLY O'CONNOR / SITTINGSTILL.NET

**Ryan Westmoreland**

During his prep career, Westmoreland accrued a more than impressive list of accolades -- something that is hardly considered mysterious upon further review of his overall high school level statistics (single season averages):

G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB	CS	AVG
25	82	38	42	9	4	3	29	13	4	14	1	.505

In the span of that four-year prep career -- and as a result of the aforementioned statistics -- Westmoreland was twice-named the Gatorade Player of the Year in Rhode Island (2007, 2008). Throughout his time at Ports-

mouth High, the oft-described “toolsy” outfielder built a reputation as one of the elite amateur prospects in his home state of Rhode Island; a fact not overlooked by the Boston Red Sox who, not coincidentally, were the Newport (RI) native’s favorite team growing up.

Despite being highly touted entering the 2008 MLB Draft, Westmoreland went undrafted through the first four rounds--mainly in light of concerns that he would forgo signing to play baseball at NCAA powerhouse Vanderbilt. However, Boston thought highly enough of the 6’2” all-around talent to draft him using their 5th round selection (172nd overall)--which, upon reflection, Westmoreland considers his greatest baseball-related accomplishment. A chance to play for his childhood team in the shadow of his own backyard, combined with a signing bonus of \$2 million, was enough to persuade Westmoreland to pass up the chance to play college baseball in favor of pursuing his major league dreams.

When asked to describe his experiences on draft day, Westmoreland was quick to point out that while being selected by his all-time favorite team was truly exciting, just being drafted in itself proved to be a humbling experience in general.

“Draft day was a very hectic and nerve wracking day for me. I was really unsure about where and when I would be drafted, if at all. However, when they announced my name I was beside myself. Not only because it was to the Red Sox -- my lifelong favorite sports team -- also just to be drafted in general. I was genuinely honored.”

With such an obvious passion for Red Sox baseball, Westmoreland was more than willing to share some of his favorite players, memories, and experiences as a child growing up in Rhode Island.

“My favorite memories as a Sox fan were watching “Nomah [Nomar Garciaparra]” and Pedro Martinez dominate. Also, I can’t forget the Aaron Boone homerun. But for sure the most memorable was the ’04 World Series win. I got to go to a game and it was an amazing experience as a 14 year

old.”

Even at the ripe age of 19, Ryan Westmoreland's game has already been likened to established Major League Baseball veterans such as former Red Sox Rocco Baldelli, and current Cleveland Indians' standout Grady Sizemore. The similarities between him and Sizemore in particular seem the most fitting -- a fact agreed upon by Ryan. Like Sizemore, Westmoreland stands at 6'2" and weighs in around 200 lbs. Both were drafted between rounds 3-5 to signing bonuses of \$2 million. But most importantly, the two feature a rare combination of speed and power from the left side of the plate, to accompany their strong defensive skills in the outfield. Westmoreland approaches such comparisons with an unassuming, yet realistic, attitude.

*‘I am honored to be compared to a player of the stature of Grady Sizemore. I feel like it is a pretty good comparison because we have similar tools.’*

“I am honored to be compared to a player of the stature of Grady Sizemore. I feel like it is a pretty good comparison because we have similar tools. Same goes for the also common comparison to Rocco Baldelli. I'm very grateful for these comparisons, however this doesn't mean I'm going to get to the big leagues and play like them too. A lot of hard work needs to go in before I can get to that stage.”

Despite undeniable similarities between his style of play and someone like Grady Sizemore's, Westmoreland explained that he doesn't necessarily model his game after anyone in particular nowadays, nor did he while growing up. However, he did express an admiration for the work ethic of one current Red Sox notable in particular.

“I don't think that deep into that kind of stuff while I'm playing. I

like to go out and just play my own game and don't try to model it after anyone. Sure, I'm in the weight room watching 'Youk' [Kevin Youkilis] work out and I'll say to myself, 'I need to work like that to get to my goal.'"

Staying on topic, Westmoreland took some time to offer his own personal dissection of his game--areas where he feels the most advanced, as well as where he'd like to improve on short-term. Ironically, both areas incorporated the facet of speed relative to his game.

"I think my strongest tool is my speed. This can be used in a few ways whether it be running a ball down in the gap, or taking second base late in a game. I feel like having speed can benefit any player and it's the most influential tool that I have. As far as improvements, I'd like to improve my ability to steal bases. I was pretty successful in Lowell last season (19 SB, 0 CS), but there's always room for improvement and I will be working hard this spring training on improving my jumps and reading pitchers and their pickoff moves."

Surely, Ryan has an advantage when it comes to reading pitchers on the base paths -- he used to be a supremely talented one himself. Presumably unbeknownst to the average Red Sox fan, Westmoreland actually pitched a perfect game in high school--striking out 19 of the 21 batters he faced. With Casey Kelly-like versatility, was it his or the Red Sox's choice that he focus more on developing as an outfielder rather than pitcher? Does he miss pitching?

"A little bit of both [his and the Red Sox's choice]. I loved pitching throughout high school, but when college and pro scouts came out, they both seemed more interested in me as an outfielder. I don't mind that at all because playing the outfield gives you a chance to play every day, whereas pitching might limit you to one game every 3-5 days."

In terms of overall persona, Westmoreland considers himself a leader by example on the field, and generally personable off of it--and with the increasing presence of internationally born players in the Red Sox's system,



Westmoreland topically cited his fluency in other languages.

“On the field I’m a guy who likes to lead by example. I’m not a loud vocal guy; I just go about my business in a professional manner and hope that others will learn from me just like I learn from them. Off the field I’m a pretty friendly guy; I get along with everyone and I’m pretty good at speaking Spanish and know some Taiwanese too!”

Much of Westmoreland’s appeal as a prospect can be attributed to the advanced nature of his abilities on the field [relative to his age]. Being chosen as the Boston Red Sox’s #1 overall prospect [Baseball America] has a lot to do with the fact that the 19-year-old had a successful minor league debut in 2009 as a member of the Lowell Spinners. It is rare for a player fresh out of high school to excel at that level when all results are generally based on raw talents alone.

For comparative purposes, here is how Westmoreland’s initial MiLB campaign (2009) stacks up to another similarly-talented major leaguer’s first experience in level A- baseball, also as a member of the New York-Pennsylvania League.

*\*Statistics for Player B are adjusted to reflect a total of 267 plate appearances (Westmoreland’s 2009 total)*

***Westmoreland:***

R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	CS	BB	SO	AVG	OBP	SLG
38	66	15	3	7	35	19	0	38	49	.296	.401	.484

***Player B:***

45	71	5	8	2	31	37	5	39	32	.317	.418	.432
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At first glance the numbers seem relatively comparable--each player excelling in some areas more so than their respective counterpart. However, upon further examination, Westmoreland’s production becomes much more impressive. Consider this: the average age of NYCL pitchers during the years

in which Westmoreland (2009) and Player B (2005) played was 21.4 and 21.3, respectively. While Westmoreland's totals may reflect similarly to Player B's, their relative ages and experience levels in these seasons differed greatly. In 2009, Westmoreland was a 19 year-old fresh out of high school; Player B (2005) was 21 years of age with three years of collegiate experience under his belt as a member of PAC-10 powerhouse, Oregon State--both facing the same level of talent.

If you haven't figured it out by now, Player B is the Red Sox's current outfielder-extraordinaire, Jacoby Ellsbury.

When asked about his experience transitioning from the high school competition he faced at Portsmouth, to that which is featured in the New York-Pennsylvania League--the challenges he faced and how he adjusted--Westmoreland noted the difference in the pitcher's talent levels; citing a difficulty picking up the advanced secondary pitches, in particular.

"At first I struggled in Lowell because it was my first year after high school, I had never seen good college pitchers. I wasn't quite used to a good college changeup or curveball/slider. However, I took it as a challenge and worked day in and day out on my pitch recognition. By the end of the season I saw a dramatic change in my ability to pick up pitches, whatever pitch it may be. I was really happy with the progress that I made because it went from a pretty obvious struggle, to a success overall. With about ten games left, my season was shortened due to a broken collarbone and I had surgery on Sept. 1. Now I am feeling better than ever and am prepared to be full strength come spring training this March."

After touching on his progression last season, the obvious follow-up subject was his short-term goals for the future, as well as the ultimate goals he has for his career. Although it remains unclear exactly where Westmoreland will start the 2010 season, it's obvious that the answer won't change his immediate goals for the future.

"I'm hoping that wherever I play this year, I will be successful. I

know that if I produce to the potential I know I have, it can generate a good season, hopefully moving me up the Minor League ladder sooner than later. [...] there are no [specific] ‘career’ goals, but the only goal I have right now is to get to the Major Leagues.”

As a top-tier prospect, one thing that you grow accustomed to is your name’s involvement in trade rumors. However, being a top prospect and subsequently involved in such rumors is a rarity for a 19 year old with just sixty games of minor league baseball under his belt. Yet, such is the case for Ryan Westmoreland. Just months removed from being signed by the Red Sox (August, 2008), Westmoreland found his name being tossed around in discussions involving the likes of Roy Halladay and Adrian Gonzalez toward the end of last season’s non-waiver trade deadline. Being that this is surely the first experience he’s had in dealing with this--and having to cope with the thought of potentially be dealt from his favorite team--Ryan addressed how he goes about his business amidst such rumors.

“I try my best to pay zero attention to any of that stuff. Of course I got about 300 text messages saying, ‘You’re on ESPN about to get traded,’ but other than that I block that stuff out. If I were to let something like a trade rumor affect me, then it can only worsen my play on the field. If I get traded, I get traded; it’s all still baseball--just wearing a different jersey.”

Lastly, Ryan had this to say when asked if there was any message he’d like to convey to OTM readers and Red Sox fans alike:

“I’d just like Red Sox fans out there to know that there won’t ever be a time where I don’t give 110 percent. I go all out every day and try my best to help the team win in any way possible.”

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*Logan Lietz is a writer for OverTheMonster.com.*

# Over the Monster's Top 20 Prospects

*OTM's top prospects list was created over a span of three months during the offseason. OTM readers voted on each slot, giving this list a true fan perspective.*

1. Casey Kelly, RHP
2. Ryan Westmoreland, OF
3. Ryan Kalish, OF
4. Josh Reddick, OF
5. Anthony Rizzo, 1B
6. Lars Anderson, 1B
7. Jose Iglesias, SS
8. Junichi Tazawa, RHP
9. Michael Bowden, RHP
10. Luis Exposito, C
11. Stolmy Pimentel, RHP
12. Che-Hsuan Lin, OF
13. Derrik Gibson, SS
14. Reymond Fuentes, OF
15. Felix Doubront, RHP
16. David Renfroe, SS/3B
17. Roman Mendez, RHP
18. Boss Moanaroa, 1B
19. Tim Federowicz, C
20. Madison Younginer, RHP

# What's Ahead?

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*Members of the OTM writing team break down the Red Sox's 40-man roster plus include their predictions for 2010. Also, SBN bloggers from the A.L. East preview their teams.*

# Breaking Down the 40-Man Roster

*by OTM Staff*

*Atchison, Scott | 48 | Pitcher*

**R/R - 6'2", 200lbs – BORN: 3/29/76**

**Breakdown:** After signing with the Sox in 2007, only to end up going to play for the Hanshin Tigers in Japan, Atchison is returning to the MLB with the Red Sox. Primarily a fastball/slider pitcher known for his excellent control, Atchison is probably coming off his best season of professional baseball. In 2009, he posted an impressive 1.70 ERA with 81 strikeouts in an impressive 90 innings of relief. He is hoping to be able to replicate those numbers back in the MLB in 2010.

**2010 Forecast:** Although Atchison will be coming to spring training looking to fight for a spot on the bullpen, chances are that he will begin the year at Pawtucket. Although he'll be in his age 34 year, he's seen little service time and still has an option year left, so the Red Sox will have the ability to call him up when necessary and stash him in AAA when he isn't needed in the pen. The Red Sox are clearly hoping he sees a good deal of success with the big league club as they hold very inexpensive club options for the next two years.

*Bard, Daniel | 51 | Pitcher*

**R/R – 6'4", 200lbs – BORN: 6/25/85**

**Breakdown:** Bard's best known for his heat: a fastball that has the tendency to touch triple digits. Bard, a rookie in 2009, was called up in May to strengthen an all ready strong bullpen and he did just that. Working as a middle reliever, Bard proved he had what it took to paint the corners of

the strikezone and make batters look foolish swinging through his arsenal of pitches, which includes a big-breaking slider. His fastball-slider combo helped him strike out 63 batters in 49.1 innings of work in his first big league stint.

**2010 Forecast:** Bard is now a staple in the Red Sox bullpen. He'll most likely see time in middle relief to start the season, but could become a setup man as the season progresses. If closer Jonathan Papelbon needs rest, Bard could see time as the closer.

***Bates, Aaron | 75 | First base***

**R/R - 6'4", 230lbs – BORN: 3/10/84**

**Breakdown:** Known as an intelligent baseball player, Bates has carried his solid glove at first base and decent plate discipline with him throughout the minors. He has a lot of power potential, but has seen that drop off quite a bit since moving up to AAA Pawtucket. Still, he impressed in his major league debut with the Red Sox in 2009, hitting for a .364/.417/.545 line in appearances in just 5 games. And if he can improve his approach on breaking balls, he could be a very valuable asset to a major league club.

**2010 Forecast:** Bates will be one of the players with something to prove in Spring Training. Though he is slated to begin the year in AAA Pawtucket, if the Red Sox are successful in trading Mike Lowell during Spring Training, he could well find himself on Boston's bench to start the year as a backup 1B. If he does end up starting in AAA, chances are good that at some point in the season he'll see a bit more playing time at Fenway.

***Beckett, Josh | 19 | Pitcher***

**R/R – 6'5", 220lbs – BORN: 5/15/80**

**Breakdown:** Beckett is widely considered one of the premier starting pitchers in baseball. Mixing an impressive variety of pitches, including

a mid-90's fastball, a 12-6 curveball, and a very effective changeup, Beckett has looked very impressive in a Red Sox uniform after a very weak 2006 season. He is known as a "bulldog" type pitcher, who is determined to take the ball every 5 days and win the ballgame. Despite some time spent on the disabled list in the last 2 years, Beckett has pitched over 200 innings in 3 of his 4 years with the Red Sox. As one of the headliners of a very impressive rotation, the Red Sox are hoping that the quality of pitchers surrounding him will inspire him to pitch even more impressively than before.

**2010 Forecast:** Though it remains to be seen if he will be the Red Sox Opening Day starter in 2010, Beckett is definitely one of the anchors of the Sox rotation. In the final year of his contract in his age 30 season, Beckett will be looking to prove his value in 2010, and Red Sox fans should expect to see some impressive performances from him in the coming year.

### ***Beltre, Adrian | 29 | Third base***

**R/R – 5'11", 220lbs – BORN: 4/7/79**

**Breakdown:** Long regarded as one of the top defensive players in all of baseball, Beltre has come to Boston for two reasons: to win and to prove that he still knows how to swing a bat. Coming off of an injured season where his bat was nothing short of terrible, he has something to prove. Between being fully recovered from his injuries and moving from the pitcher's haven of Safeco field to the hitter-friendly Fenway, he and the Red Sox are counting on seeing a resurgence in his bat. Still, despite his off year of hitting and missing 51 games due to injury, Beltre still managed to be a 2.4 WAR player in 2009 because of his impressive defense. His road splits show that away from Safeco, he should be a very effective batter, easily capable of replacing Mike Lowell's production with the addition of some more power.

**2010 Forecast:** Beltre is written in as the everyday third baseman in the defensively stellar 2010 Red Sox. He will be unlikely to lose that position unless he has a truly horrific year at the plate or is plagued by more in-



juries in 2010. His home/away splits with the Mariners show that he should be an asset for the Red Sox both offensively and defensively.

***Bonser, Boof | 30 | Pitcher***

**R/R – 6'4", 260lbs – BORN: 10/14/81**

**Breakdown:** After missing all of the 2009 season due to shoulder surgery to repair a torn labrum, Bonser is hoping to prove that he can still be a valuable member of a pitching staff. Although not a hard thrower, Bonser is known to have excellent control and is capable of spotting all of his pitches for strikes. This repertoire includes a well-located fastball as well as an impressive curveball and a decent changeup. He is capable of handling a pretty heavy workload- most of his time on the Twins was as a starter so he provides some versatility.

**2010 Forecast:** Bonser will be among the plethora of pitchers fighting for a spot in the Red Sox bullpen. He could provide value as a long reliever/ mop up guy and spot starter if one of the Red Sox starters doesn't end up taking that role. As he is out of options, he will have to clear waivers before getting sent to Pawtucket, so some people see him as a favorite for the bullpen because of that. Expect to see him in the pen as a long reliever if one of the 6 starters is on the disabled list for opening day. Of course, first he has to prove he can still pitch effectively post-surgery.

***Bowden, Michael | 64 | Pitcher***

**R/R – 6'3", 215lbs – BORN: 9/9/86**

**Breakdown:** Although he saw his stock drop quite a bit after an unimpressive major league showing in 2009, Bowden remains one of the Sox top pitching prospects. Featuring four pitches -- a sinking low-90's fastball, a decent 12-6 curve, a very effective circle change and a developing slider -- Bowden has shown excellent command of the strike zone. Though he mostly raced through the minors, his peripherals stumbled somewhat in 2009, and

he is hoping to make up for it in 2010. He is still quite young -- he won't turn 24 until September -- but there is a general consensus that 2010 is the year he needs to make his mark if he wants to make it as an MLB starter.

**2010 Forecast:** Though some people think that he would be a good choice for Boston's bullpen, it is more likely that the Red Sox would like to see the young pitcher continue to develop as a starter. This year will most likely decide whether he still projects as a solid back-of-rotation starter or if he will end up converting to a reliever in the future. He is bound to crack the Boston pitching staff at some point in 2010, either as a spot starter or as a reliever at the end of the season.

### ***Brown, Dusty | 80 | Catcher***

**R/R – 6'0", 180lbs – BORN: 6/19/82**

**Breakdown:** Pawtucket's long-time catcher, Dusty Brown is known as a very solid defensive catcher who can provide some value with the bat. With no really exceptional offensive tools, Brown probably projects as an MLB backup catcher, though as he is already 27, he will be hoping to get the chance to prove his worth at the major league level soon. He had his Major League debut in 2009, appearing as a defensive replacement in 6 games. He was only at the plate for 3 at bats, although one of them was a home run into the Green Monster seats.

**2010 Forecast:** As the 25-man roster already has its full complement of catchers on it, Brown is certain to, once again, start at Pawtucket in 2010. If, however, Varitek falters and ends up getting released before the Red Sox think Mark Wagner is ready to see serious time in the majors, expect to see Brown seeing more time as Boston's backup catcher. There is a good chance that the 2010 season will be the years he begins to see some starts in the majors.

### ***Buchholz, Clay | 11 | Pitcher***

**L/R – 6'3", 190lbs – BORN: 8/14/84**

**Breakdown:** At last it appears that Buchholz is ready to be the pitcher the Red Sox have been counting on him to develop into. Known for his superior changeup and excellent curveballs, in 2009, Buchholz finally appeared to gain some confidence on the mound as well as some confidence in his fastball at the major league level- throwing it 55% of the time, up from 47% in 2008. In 2009, he also developed an impressive ability to induce ground balls- a skill which is not only very useful with the short left field in Fenway, but which should play beautifully into the impressive infield defense Boston will be sporting in 2010. Despite the fact that he has, so far, been unable to replicate his impressive strikeout numbers in the minors with the Red Sox, this newfound groundball ability should play very well for him in the coming season. If he can keep his composure and retain his confidence in all of his pitches, 2010 should be a breakout season for Buchholz.

**2010 Forecast:** After the Red Sox were knocked out of the playoffs in 2009, Theo Epstein said to pencil Buchholz in as a starter for 2010, and even with the addition of John Lackey to the rotation, there is no reason for that to change. He needs to continue to face major league batters to continue improving, so expect to see him every fifth day for the Red Sox in the coming season unless he is included in some sort of blockbuster trade- which would be very surprising after he's made it this far with the organization. The Red Sox are hoping he will show himself to be the top-of-rotation starter in 2010 that they've been counting on him to develop into.

### ***Cameron, Mike | 23 | Center field***

**R/R- 6'2", 205lbs – BORN: 1/8/73**

**Breakdown:** Mike Cameron has almost certainly been the Red Sox most controversial acquisition of this offseason for several reasons- first, he does not provide the offense the Red Sox lost with Jason Bay; second, he

displaced the much-loved Jacoby Ellsbury from center field to left; and third, he will be one of the oldest players on the Red Sox at 37, playing probably the most athletic position. Despite this, however, the Red Sox are very optimistic about what he can contribute. Although he is an offensive downgrade from Jason Bay, he still provides very good value with the bat- he has proven that he is perennially capable of hitting around 25 home runs, plus he boasts a swing that should absolutely pepper the Monster over the course of the season. In addition to this, he is one of the premier defensive players in the game, cementing the Red Sox lineup as one of the best defensive lineups in the MLB. Combined with speed on the basepaths, he should be able to contribute to the Sox in every way. Although he strikes out a lot, he also walks a decent amount and has quite a bit of power. The Red Sox believe that his defense and speed will more than make up for any deficiencies in his bat as compared to Jason Bay. Despite his age, he has shown no signs of decline in recent years and is well known to be in excellent shape and a fitness freak.

**2010 Forecast:** Although it wasn't determined when he first signed with the Sox, he has been announced to be their starting center fielder coming into the 2010 season. He should bring his excellent defense as always, and expect to see one of the better offensive years of his career with 81 games coming at Fenway, which looks like it was designed with his swing in mind.

### ***Castro, Fabio | 59 | Pitcher***

**L/L – 5'7", 185lbs – BORN: 01/20/85**

**Breakdown:** Fabio Castro was picked up this last December by the Red Sox as a free agent. The minuscule left-hander had seen less than 20 innings of work above A+ ball before getting his first taste of Major League Baseball experience as a 21 year-old in Texas--and eventually Philadelphia. After bouncing around a bit the last few years, Castro has landed with Boston, and brings with him an above-average cut fastball and only decent sec-

ondary pitches (changeup, curveball). Despite his limited repertoire, Castro is said to mix up his pitches well.

**2010 Forecast:** Castro is another candidate for a late September call-up as the big league roster expands for the post-season. Spring Training, as well as his time in the minors to start the year, will likely be the barometer used by the organization in terms of gauging his MLB readiness come the stretch run--although it is certainly possible that Castro see some limited time at Fenway Park early on in the year as the bull-pen lacks the depth that it has had in recent years.

### ***Delcarmen, Manny | 17 | Pitcher***

**R/R – 6’2”, 205lbs – BORN: 02/16/82**

**Breakdown:** Manny Delcarmen was one of the most effective relief pitchers during the Red Sox’s championship season in 2007, sporting a 2.05 ERA and holding batters to an average of just .183 (44 innings pitched). The following two seasons, 2008 and 2009, saw Delcarmen take a step back progress-wise; while 2008 remained statistically-respectable, last season was an enormous disappointment overall. Recently, Delcarmen admitted to experiencing right shoulder fatigue towards the end of last season--something that kept him from participating in the Angels’ ALDS sweep of the Red Sox. The right-hander vows to be more honest with the coaching staff, and looks to rebound in a strong way come 2010.

**2010 Forecast:** After the hiccup that was 2009, one can only expect Delcarmen to return to the form that saw him handle American League batters during the 2007 season. Full season strength will surely be a focal point for Delcarmen’s preparations entering spring training, and should help translate into the type of year that fans had become used to from the young pitcher prior to 2009.

### ***Doubront, Felix | 73 | Pitcher***

**L/L – 6'2", 165lbs – BORN: 10/23/87**

**Breakdown:** Felix Doubront has recently emerged as one of the Red Sox's top pitching prospects, thanks to back-to-back impressive seasons in 2008-09. The 22 year-old left-hander struggled with injuries in 2007, but the subsequent seasons have given fans and coaches a glimpse of what Doubront can really do on the diamond. Signed out of Venezuela as an international free agent in July of 2004, Felix has become one of the premier successes produced by the overseas scouting department. Spring training in 2010 marks Doubront's first experience with the big-league club, and many suspect that fans will get a look at his combination of fastball/changeup/curveball at Fenway Park sometime later this year.

**2010 Forecast:** This season will likely begin in Pawtucket or Portland for Felix, but it's hard to imagine that Doubront isn't featured as a September call-up if his recent trend of quality seasons were to continue. The Red Sox are certainly becoming aware of Doubront's successes, as they included him in this year's Rookie Program, as well as spring training camp. With Boston's bull-pen remaining an uncertainty in the eyes of some, Doubront could serve as that added depth later in the season--particularly in September when the roster is expanded.

### ***Ellsbury, Jacoby | 2 | Outfielder***

**L/L – 6'1", 185lbs – BORN: 09/11/83**

**Breakdown:** Ellsbury used 2009 to put together a quiet--yet productive--offensive season. By now, everyone is aware of his base-stealing prowess, but his numbers at the plate were equally impressive. From 2008 to 2009, Ellsbury raised his batting average .021, his OBP .019, and decreased his strikeout total by six despite 70 more total at-bats; it's numbers like that which have Red Sox's fans excited about the emergence of a prototypical lead-off man at the top of the 2010 lineup.

**2010 Forecast:** 2010 is the year that Jacoby Ellsbury will look to establish himself amongst the elite lead-off hitters in the game; both offensively and defensively. After setting the Red Sox's all-time stolen base record in 2009, Ellsbury will shift his defense to left field in order to make room for newcomer Mike Cameron in center—a move that most believe will keep Ellsbury's legs fresh, something that can only enhance the threat that he represents offensively.

***Drew, J.D. | 7 | Outfielder***

**L/R – 6'1", 200lbs – BORN: 11/20/75**

**Breakdown:** J.D. Drew again had his fair share of lingering ailments in 2009, that surely didn't go unnoticed by Boston fans. However, despite posting a modest total of 452 at-bats, Drew still managed to have a solid season at the plate. Defensively, Drew was again above-average when patrolling right field--and off the field, Drew again proved to be a leader. Now in his mid-30's, J.D. likely has just a few years left in his tank, but there's no reason to expect a dramatic decrease in his overall numbers heading into 2010.

**2010 Forecast:** The question, each year, has evolved from whether or not J.D. Drew will spend any time on the disabled list to just how substantial that time will be. With a platoon of capable backups on the bench in the event that Drew again is bothered by his seemingly always troublesome back--or whatever it may be--the Red Sox seem more than able, this season, to cope with any of Drew's missed time.

***Fien, Casey | -- | Pitcher***

**R/R - 6'2", 195lbs -- BORN: 10/21/83**

**Breakdown:** Fien, a former 20th-round pick out of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, has spent 4 years working his way through the Tigers' minor league system before making his MLB debut last year. In his short stint in the majors, Fien was roughed up for 10 earned runs in 11 innings. Still, his num-

bers in the minor leagues haven't been bad, as he posted a 3.41 ERA in AAA Toledo last year. Rather more impressive are the peripherals he's shown during his time in the minors, striking out more than a batter an inning, and walking only 2 per 9.

**2010 Outlook:** Fien is just the latest in a series of pitchers acquired by the Red Sox over the season to either compete for the final bullpen spot, or provide organizational depth. The most recent addition to this list before Fien, Gaby Hernandez, was designated for assignment to make room for Fien on the 40-man roster. At this point, it's hard to expect many of them to make a significant contribution, if any at all during the course of the season. Still, depth never hurt anyone.

### ***Hall, Bill | 22 | Infielder***

**R/R – 6'0", 210lbs – BORN: 12/28/79**

**Breakdown:** Bill Hall comes to the Red Sox after spending his entire career with the Milwaukee Brewers, starting in 2002. Hall has never been known for his bat, despite an uncharacteristically potent 2006 season (35 HR). From 2007 through 2009, Hall's offensive numbers saw a steady decrease, to put it mildly--ultimately culminating in an awful 2009 campaign (334 AB, 201 BA, 120 SO, 27 BB). Hall will likely serve as a last-resort utility man with the Red Sox; his versatility defensively being the only reason he's on the team as his offense certainly does not fit what the Red Sox are generally about.

**2010 Forecast:** As stated above, Hall will be plugged in during the occasional double-header, or in the worst case scenario. Hall's glove and ability to play almost any position defensively is the main--if not only--reason that he's wearing a Red Sox uniform. Any upside from his bat is simply an added bonus.



### ***Hermida, Jeremy | 32 | Outfielder***

**L/R – 6'3", 220lbs – BORN: 01/30/84**

**Breakdown:** Hermida and the Red Sox agreed to a one-year deal this off season, giving Boston a little more outfield depth prior to adding Mike Cameron. It has been said that the Red Sox see something in Hermida, who is still relatively young, having just turned 26. After a very promising 2007 season with the Florida Marlins, Hermida has been mediocre since. Like fellow outfielder J.D. Drew, health has been a concern for Hermida in recent years--2008 being the only season in which Jeremy had 500 or more at-bats.

**2010 Forecast:** Hermida represents one of the Red Sox's best options as a fourth outfielder--something that they will in all likelihood need often in 2010 given J.D. Drew's constant injury concerns. Coming off the bench may positively impact Hermida's game by decreasing his frequent injuries, as he will be allotted more rest time than he has been used to at this point in his still-young career. 2010 will be an important season for Hermida, and will likely have a profound impact on where he goes from 2010--a contract season.

### ***Hulett, Tug | 70 | Infielder***

**L/R – 5'10", 185lbs – BORN: 02/28/83**

**Breakdown:** Hulett has seen just 45 games in the major leagues heading into 2010--the last being with the Royals prior to being traded to the Boston in November. A 26 year-old veteran of the minor leagues, Hulett saw a successful 2009 season with Triple-A Omaha (part of the Royals' organization), but has yet to have an impact on the major league level.

**2010 Forecast:** Despite being slotted in the designated hitter spot for one of the Red Sox's March 3rd spring training contests, don't expect to see much of Hulett this season at Fenway Park. Tug will, at most, be a spare part of the 2010 Red Sox club. How he will factor in the team's plans beyond that is still uncertain.

***Iglesias, Jose | 76 | Infielder***

**R/R – 5'11", 175lbs – BORN: 01/05/90**

**Breakdown:** Jose Iglesias was signed at the end of 2009 out of Havana, Cuba, and quickly labeled the Red Sox's shortstop of the future. The 20 year-old is said to have excellent defensive skills, but remains a bit unrefined at the plate. Iglesias performed well during his time in the fall league as a part of Mesa, hitting .275 in 69 at-bats, but still figures to be a couple years from truly laying claim to the shortstop position at Fenway Park that has seen inconsistent production as of late. Perhaps the most impressive thing to this point relative to Iglesias, as a person as well as ball-player, is his level of maturity.

**2010 Forecast:** Iglesias will more than likely spend the majority of 2010 in Pawtucket, but figures to potentially see some major league exposure during short clips during the season. After signing Iglesias to such an immense bonus just months ago, the Red Sox are watching the young shortstop closely this year to determine just how far he's come since defecting from Cuba a few short months ago--and in turn, how far away he is from impacting the major league club.

***Lackey, John | 40 | Pitcher***

**R/R – 6'6", 245lbs – BORN: 10/23/78**

**Breakdown:** As the newest member of the Red Sox's starting rotation, John Lackey adds yet another top-tier starter to what has become a truly imposing pitching staff. In his eight seasons with the Angels prior to joining Boston, Lackey established himself as a relatively reliable front of the rotation starter, compiling 102 wins and a career 3.81 earned run average. In his first five full seasons Lackey displayed a high level of durability, starting 33 games each year with the exception of 2004, in which he still managed 32 starts. However, despite posting an impressive 23-7 record and an ERA similar to his 3.81 career mark, Lackey spent time on the disabled list in each of

the previous two seasons (averaged 25.5 starts during that span). No stranger to American League competition, the question with Lackey isn't whether he can be successful with the Red Sox--it's how well he can avoid his recent injury problems.

**2010 Forecast:** After signing a 5-year deal with the Red Sox this off season, John Lackey appears ready to become a long-term staple of the Red Sox's rotation. His presence makes the Red Sox's staff one of the most impressive in all of baseball--on paper. Now with three certified aces, Boston's biggest strength has seemingly become starting pitching; much of that can be attributed to the signing of John Lackey.

***Lester, Jon | 31 | Pitcher***

**L/L - 6'2", 190 lbs - BORN: 1/7/84**

**Breakdown:** After a breakout season in 2008, Jon Lester continued to dominate in 2009. He lowered his FIP to a godly 3.15, while striking out a career-high 225 batters. Lester's arsenal features a devastating cutter, a plus curveball, a decent changeup, and a mid-90s fastball that he can locate with precision.

**2010 Forecast:** Lester has been the de-facto Red Sox ace for two years now, and even in a rotation with Josh Beckett and John Lackey, there is every indication that will continue. Look for another big season from the lanky lefty.

***Lowell, Mike | 25 | Third base***

**R/R - 6'4", 205 lbs - BORN: 2/24/74**

**Breakdown:** Lowell's a contact hitter who loves to pull the ball and bounce it around Fenway's friendly confines. Last year he hit for a solid .811 OPS. Unfortunately, Lowell's defense has fallen off dramatically in the past year, as he fell prey to injury. Given his age and recent injury history, it's unlikely that his once-vaunted defensive skills will return.

**2010 Forecast:** Can you say trade bait? With Adrian Beltre at third and David Ortiz at DH, Lowell is a man without a position. By the time spring training ends, or by the trade deadline, he should be in another uniform.

***Lowrie, Jed | 12 | Infielder***

**B/R - 6'0", 180 lbs - BORN: 4/17/84**

**Breakdown:** The switch-hitting Lowrie had a lost year in 2009. Plagued by injury, he played in only 32 games and hit a dreadful .476 OPS. The season was especially disappointing, as expectations were high after his strong defense and decent hitting (.739 OPS) in 2008.

**2010 Forecast:** With Marco Scutaro as the starting shortstop, Lowrie should see time as the Sox utility man, covering second, short and third. Jedheads probably have to wait at least two years before they see Jed Lowrie, starting shortstop.

***Martinez, Victor | 41 | Catcher***

**B/R - 6'2", 210 lbs - BORN: 12/23/78**

**Breakdown:** Victor Martinez is best known for his offense, and the 31-year-old catcher certainly made that clear last season in Boston, as he hit .336 / .405 / .507 in 56 games for the Sox. But the 31-year-old catcher also deserves credit for his game-calling skills - he's successfully handled pitchers from CC Sabathia to Cliff Lee to Tim Wakefield, and his career catcher ERA is a solid 4.44.

**2010 Forecast:** It's going to be very hard to take Martinez away from the plate, let alone out of the lineup. In the years since 2004 that he's been healthy, VMart has averaged 148 games played. Given Martinez's great offense and solid catching, Francona will have a tough job finding playing time for backup catcher Jason Varitek.

***Matsuzaka, Daisuke | 18 | Pitcher***

**R/R - 6'0", 185 lbs - BORN: 9/13/80**

**Breakdown:** Daisuke Matsuzaka is looking to rebound after a brutal 2009, most of which he missed to injury. He came back strong in September, posting a 2.22 ERA in four starts, but was awful early in the season (8.23 ERA). Daisuke features a strong arsenal of pitches, including a fastball that can reach the mid-90s, an excellent slider, a good cutter, a changeup and a splitter.

**2010 Forecast:** Matsuzaka is arguably the biggest question mark on the team. Reportedly he spent the offseason getting into great shape, and with his strong September there's reason for optimism. With Lester, Beckett and Lackey, the Sox aren't counting on Matsuzaka to anchor the rotation, but any quality production they get out of him will be appreciated.

***Okajima, Hideki | 37 | Pitcher***

**L/L - 6'1", 195 lbs - BORN: 12/25/75**

**Breakdown:** A hero in the dark since 2007, Okajima has quietly been an excellent set-up man for the Red Sox. He locates his high-80s fastball with superb accuracy, and makes hitters look foolish with his sharp curveball and darting changeup.

**2010 Forecast:** Okajima figures to be one of the Red Sox primary setup men, depending in part on how Daniel Bard fares in the pen. Two areas of concern: Okajima's FIP has risen every year in Boston, and at age 34 he is on the wrong side of 30. Still, it's hard to be too pessimistic about the deceptive lefty.

***Ortiz, David | 34 | Designated hitter***

**L/L - 6'4", 230 lbs - BORN: 11/18/75**

**Breakdown:** Ortiz had an awful start to 2009, with just one homer through April and May. Thankfully his bat heated up in June, and he went

on to hit for a .904 OPS to finish the season. The lefty pull hitter still has the ability to take the ball out of the yard, but he's been declining for the past three years.

**2010 Forecast:** Ortiz should recover from last year, and improve his stats - he's not as bad as he was in 2009. Projection systems like CHONE and Marcel expect him to raise his OPS into the .830-.850 range. Still, as an aging slugger with recent injuries, Ortiz is unlikely to put up eye-popping stats like he did as recently as 2007.

***Papelbon, Jonathan | 58 | Pitcher***

**R/R - 6'4", 225 lbs - BORN: 11/23/80**

**Breakdown:** After years of consistent relief work, Jonathan Papelbon gave Red Sox fans a season of shaky saves. He followed it up by breaking their hearts in the ALDS. While his ERA remained low, many of Papelbon's underlying stats were concerning: his FIP rose by a full point to 3.05, and his walk rate tripled from the previous season, to 3.18 per 9 innings. Papelbon relies on his blazing 97 mph fastball to set up his less impressive slider and splitter.

**2010 Forecast:** Papelbon, even with more walks and dicey saves, was still a great reliever in 2009. With Daniel Bard knocking on the door and a big free agent contract in sight, Paps has every reason to succeed in 2010. Look for fewer walks and fewer panic attack-inducing saves from the intimidating closer.

***Pedroia, Dustin | 15 | Second base***

**R/R - 5'9", 180 lbs - BORN: 8/17/83**

**Breakdown:** While his 2009 numbers were down slightly from 2008, Pedroia was coming off an MVP-winning season. Arguably the best second baseman in the league, Pedroia mixes great plate discipline and bat control with superb defense. The righty contact hitter showed off another skill last

year - baserunning - as he stole 18 bases while only being caught 3 times.

**2010 Forecast:** Pedroia is young, healthy, and in his prime. Look for another strong season from him.

***Ramirez, Ramon | 56 | Pitcher***

**R/R – 5’11”, 190lbs – BORN: 8/31/81**

**Breakdown:** Ramon Ramirez came out of the gate hot, posting an ERA of 1.85 through the end of June before struggling some down the stretch, particularly against lefties. Ramirez has a low-mid 90’s fastball with late life he throws about half the time, along with a slider and changeup. He struggled last year to get his fastball inside against lefties, and was punished for it.

**2010 Forecast:** Despite his late-season struggles, Ramirez remains one of Boston’s top bullpen arms, and should act as one of the go-to-guys in the 8th inning to start the season, particularly against right handed hitters.

***Ramirez, Ramon A. | 58 | Pitcher***

**R/R – 6’0”, 190lbs – BORN: 9/16/82**

**Breakdown:** Claimed off waivers from the Reds, the “other” Ramon Ramirez has spent time as a starter and reliever over the last 2 seasons with Cincinnati, seeing limited success in both roles. Ramirez throws a fastball that sits around 90, topping out at 92, along with a low-80’s changeup and a rarely used slider.

**2010 Forecast:** Ramirez is one of the multitude of pitchers acquired by the Sox to give a run in spring training to try and fill the final bullpen spot. If, as seems likely, he does not make the team out of camp, Ramirez could find a spot in the back of Pawtucket’s rotation, or in the bullpen.

### ***Reddick, Josh | 68 | Outfield***

**L/R – 6'2", 180lbs – BORN: 2/19/87**

**Breakdown:** Reddick started 2009 in the AA Eastern League, but quickly proved he was ready for bigger and better things, hitting 13 home runs in 256 at bats en route to a .277/.352/.520 line. Perhaps more importantly, though, Reddick refined his approach at the plate, managing to draw a career high 30 walks in just half a season. During a cup of coffee with Boston and a promotion to AAA, Reddick returned to his earlier hacking ways, swinging at pitches well out of the zone. Still, he showed some flashes of the big power he is known for, with 6 of his 10 major league hits going for extra bases, including home runs. A big question for Reddick's value going forward is if he has the range enough to go along with his cannon arm to cover center field in the majors.

**2010 Forecast:** Reddick will start the season with the AAA Paw Sox, and try to regain the patience and success he had in Portland. If Drew, Ellsbury, or Cameron see any time on the DL, expect Reddick to be the first man called up to fill the hole.

### ***Richardson, Dustin | 54 | Pitcher***

**L/L – 6'6", 220lbs – BORN: 1/9/1984**

**Breakdown:** A former starter, Richardson has found success since converting to a reliever before the 2009 season. After posting a 2.78 ERA in Portland and a 1.69 ERA in Pawtucket, he was given a cup of coffee with the Red Sox at the end of the year. Richardson relies primarily on a low-90s four-seam fastball, mixing it up with a high-80s two-seamer, a changeup, and a slurve. If he can't cut it against major league righties, Richardson still projects as a LOOGY with his fantastic splits.

**2010 Forecast:** Another guy with a shot at the final bullpen spot, Richardson has as good a shot as any of his competitors. Otherwise, he will spend the season in Pawtucket as one of the main guys in the bullpen as the



Sox try to figure out for sure what they have in Richardson.

***Scutaro, Marco | 16 | Shortstop***

**R/R – 5'10", 185lbs – BORN: 10/30/75**

**Breakdown:** 2009 was a career year for Marco Scutaro, sending him into the offseason as the #1 free agent shortstop. Scutaro is a solid-fielding shortstop with some limited speed on the basepaths. Up until 2009, Scutaro was a below average batter, only twice before managing an OPS over .700. Last year, though, Scutaro drastically changed his approach at the plate, becoming much more selective. The result: Fewer ground balls, more homers, more walks, and a .282/.379/.409 line.

**2010 Forecast:** While many project Scutaro to undergo significant regression, it seems that his bump in numbers came primarily as the result of a better approach instead of luck (his BABIP, while high for him, was not by any means unreasonable). If Scutaro can retain that approach in 2010, there's no reason why he shouldn't be able to stay close to his 2009 numbers, especially in cozy Fenway Park. Combined with his solid fielding ability at shortstop, Scutaro has a good shot at being the answer to the shortstop question that has plagued the Red Sox for years.

***Tazawa, Junichi | 63 | Pitcher***

**R/R – 5'11", 180lbs – BORN: 6/6/86**

**Breakdown:** Coming into the Red Sox system in 2009, there was a lot of question about what level the Japanese import was at: AA? AAA? Straight to the majors? Tazawa quickly breezed through AA, and ended up making his Major League debut in August. While he was roughed up in his short time with the big league team, Tazawa showed he is close to being major league ready. Tazawa's fastball ranges from the high 80s to the mid 90s, sitting around 90. He mixes in a good curveball that sits in the mid 70s with a changeup and slider that sit in the low 80s.

**2010 Forecast:** Tazawa will join Michael Bowden to form a formidable combo at the top of the Pawtucket rotation. Tazawa only pitched 11 innings in AAA last year, and so will have to prove himself at that level before getting the bump over Bowden in the depth charts, but could well do so if he continues his numbers from Portland. Either way, expect him to be one of the first call ups if the Sox need a starter.

***Varitek, Jason | 33 | Catcher***

**S/R – 6’2”, 230lbs – BORN: 4/11/1972**

**Breakdown:** There’s no question that, at 37, the captain’s best days are behind him. Varitek has been a black hole in Boston’s lineup for the last 2 years, seemingly incapable of catching up to anything and striking out on every high fastball he sees. Behind the plate, the computer is still hard at work, and Varitek can call as good a game as anyone. But teams will run wild against his arm, and last year more troubling problems started emerging with problematic dropped 3rd strikes, though Tek remains a great backstop, rarely allowing a ball to get past him.

**2010 Forecast:** Last year marked the end of an era for Boston as Tek was forced to pass on the starting catching job to Victor Martinez. Varitek will serve as the backup catcher in 2010, and perhaps as the personal catcher of Josh Beckett, who made his preference to have Tek behind the plate known last year. The extra rest may help keep Varitek fresh, avoiding the sharp decline in his numbers that has come after the first few months the last 2 years.

***Wagner, Mark | 81 | Catcher***

**R/R – 6’1”, 205lbs – BORN: 6/11/84**

**Breakdown:** A prospect who should perhaps be garnering more attention than he is, Wagner is a strong defensive catcher with good offensive numbers whose reputation has suffered from seemingly inconsistent perfor-

mances and a disastrous 2008. Behind the plate, Wagner has a cannon arm which has allowed him to throw out over 40% of baserunners between AA and AAA. He's a good fielder, can block pitches, and knows how to call a game. At the plate, Wagner has typically done very well at every level, putting up high on base and power numbers. His problems come in periods of transition after mid-season promotions, where he tends to struggle (last year was much the same, with a .887 OPS in 153 AA at bats followed by a .619 OPS in 154 AAA at bats). Wagner strikes out a fair amount, but walks just as much, attesting to his patient approach at the plate.

**2010 Forecast:** Wagner will be the first catcher called up if either Jason Varitek or Victor Martinez have to spend time on the DL. In the meantime, he will have to prove that he was just following his typical pattern with his late-season slump last year by coming out strong in AAA. If Wagner does have a good year, then he might end up as a good dark horse candidate for the Sox' "catcher of the future" position.

### ***Wakefield, Tim | 49 | Pitcher***

**R/R – 5'2", 210lbs – BORN: 8/2/66**

**Breakdown:** The longest tenured member of the Boston Red Sox, Tim Wakefield will return for at least 2 more years to try and break a few team records. The last true Knuckleball master in the MLB, Wakefield provides innings and can occasionally cause fits for an entire lineup, throwing them off for a whole series. All this from an arm that might not play at second base.

**2010 Forecast:** The Red Sox will likely enter the season with 6 starting pitchers, and Tim Wakefield will be the odd man out, relegating him to the swingman position. If history is any indicator, this problem will sort itself out as the season goes along, but if it doesn't, the Red Sox may be given the luxury of occasionally skipping starts to keep the rotation fresh for the end of the year. In the meantime, Wakefield will act as a long reliever out of

the bullpen.

***Youkilis, Kevin | 20 | First Base***

**R/R – 6'1", 220lbs – BORN: 3/15/79**

**Breakdown:** One of the top defensive first baseman in the league, Youkilis had a breakout offensive year in 2008, and followed it up with an even more impressive 2009 campaign. Combining one of the most disciplined and patient plate approaches in the league with good power, Youkilis has emerged as one of the best offensive players in the league.

**2010 Forecast:** While teams may be wary of potential one-year-wonders, a two-year-wonder is a lot more rare. There's little reason to expect Youkilis to do anything other than mash the ball all year long, providing the big middle-of-the-order bat that many are fond of saying the Red Sox lack. With the addition of Adrian Beltre at third, Youkilis will likely be able to stick at first base all year long, taking advantage of his great play there. Another MVP-type year would be no surprise.

# Yankees' Front Four 'Best in Baseball'

*by Travis G., PinstripeAlley.com*

Where to begin? On paper, the 2010 Yankees are even better than the 2009 championship club. The front four starters are probably the best in baseball (yeah, I went there – I like CC Sabathia, A.J. Burnett, Andy Pettitte and Javy Vazquez more than Jon Lester, Josh Beckett, John Lackey and Dice-K, though Boston is likely the second best in MLB), and have a realistic chance to reach 800 innings between them.

The fifth spot is the most interesting competition in Spring Training. It's Joba Chamberlain vs. Phil Hughes, with the 'loser' going to the bullpen. Joe Girardi and Brian Cashman have said the competition is also open to Chad Gaudin, Sergio Mitre and Alfredo Aceves, but that's more to keep the pressure off the two young'ns. I expect whoever wins the fifth spot to be no worse than a league average starter while the 'loser' will provide excellent relief ahead of Mo Rivera. My opinion is that Joba should get the spot (unless he flops) – the Yanks have taken it easy with him the last two years just for this purpose: if he doesn't start this year, what was the point of the 'Joba Rules' in the preceding seasons?

The '09 team was relatively lucky in that they stayed healthy all year (outside of Chien Ming-Wang) and produced at or above career averages from nearly every spot in the lineup.

The Yanks essentially replaced Johnny Damon with Curtis Granderson and Hideki Matsui with Nick Johnson. The pros are a vast difference in age: the new players are a combined 12 years younger. Granderson is in the midst of his (historically speaking) prime, while Johnson seems older than he is (31). Damon and Matsui are now in their late 30s, and are likely to de-

cline from great 2009 performances. Granderson and Johnson should, at the least, see an uptick in their homerun totals moving to the new extra-homer-friendly Yankee Stadium. We all have concerns about Johnson's health, but being the primary DH should ensure a relatively healthy season.

We as fans loved watching the contributions of Damon and Matsui over the last several years, but the majority of fans seem content with Cashman's moves. After all, Granderson and Johnson will earn about \$11 million this year (depending on incentives). Damon and

*'We as fans loved watching the contributions of Damon and Matsui over the last several years, but the majority of fans seem content with Cashman's moves.'*

Matsui will earn \$14 million. I know which tandem is the better value.

Johnson looks to be the #2 batter, hitting ahead of Tex and A-Rod. Is there not a more perfect spot for a guy with a .402 career OBP? Opposing pitchers will be forced to pitch to him, so I expect a drop in OBP but an increase in slugging.

Granderson's spot is much more of a toss-up. A lot depends on how he fares against lefties: he OPS'ed only .484 against LHP last year, but is at .614 for his career. If he repeats last year, he may be dropped entirely against lefties in favor of Marcus Thames, Randy Winn or Jamie Hoffmann, but even if he returns to his career norm, he'll probably be the #8 hitter (against LHP). Really, the five through eight hitters (Jorge Posada, Nick Swisher, Robbie Cano and Curtis Granderson) could change on a game-by-game basis, depending on who's hot and the individual matchups.

The next best Spring Training competition is between gutty, gritty Brett Gardner and newly-acquired Randy Winn. Gardner's got the early edge, being only 26 years old (Winn is ten years his senior) and playing

superior defense, but if he can't hit, it won't take long for the experienced Winn to take his spot.

The third competition is for the everyday centerfielder spot: Gardner vs. Granderson. Most defensive metrics show Gardner to be the better CFer, but it's in only 121 ML games (Granderson has played 663). I believe it should be Gardner, not only because he provides superior defense, but because Grandy is signed through 2013 (for \$37 million), and he'll likely stay healthier playing the less-demanding leftfield.

Anyway, the division is once again a race between New York and Boston, but while the Sox are content with the Wild Card, Cashman & Co. want the division, and that's probably how it will end.

# Orioles to Rely on Improved Youth in 2010

*by Stacey, CamdenChat.com*

The 2010 season promises to be different for the Orioles and their fans than the dozen or so years preceding. Unless things accelerate much faster than anyone anticipates, they won't contend, but vast improvement is certainly on the minds of management, the players, the fans, and the media. Having won just 64 games in 2009 and without a winning season since 1997, the time for improvement is long overdue, but Orioles fans are happy to finally see a light at the end of the tunnel.

The Orioles' off season won't wow anyone as GM Andy MacPhail essentially performed triage on several positions in order to provide structure for the young players on the team to flourish. Starting pitcher Kevin Millwood, 1B Garrett Atkins, closer Mike Gonzalez, and SS turning 3B Miguel Tejada will join (or in Tejada's case, re-join) the Orioles for the 2010 season. Gonzalez was given a two year deal but the other three will be gone after 2010. Millwood should provide some stability to a very young rotation, Gonzalez has established himself as a very reliable bullpen presence, and Atkins and Tejada are acting as placeholders for minor leaguers 3B Josh Bell and 1B Brandon Snyder.

Any real improvement by the Orioles in 2010 and beyond will be the result of the improvement of the young players already in place. Outfielders Nick Markakis, Adam Jones, and Nolan Reimold have potential to be one of the best outfields in baseball with 4th outfielder Felix Pie providing outstanding defense and a bat with some pop off the bench. The much hyped catcher Matt Wieters stumbled a bit upon his promotion in 2009 but closed the season on a surge and looks poised for a big year in 2010. The infield is



still littered with old guys including the aforementioned Atkins and Tejada at the corners, defensive wiz but unfortunately very light hitting Cesar Izturis at SS, and team veteran Brian Roberts at 2B.

The 2009 Orioles had a terrible starting rotation that can only improve in 2010. Millwood will take the reins as the #1 pitcher, pushing 3 year veteran Jeremy Guthrie down a slot. The rest of the rotation will be built with three of the Orioles young pitchers. Brad Bergesen had a very successful rookie campaign in 2009 and will attempt to

*‘The 2009 Orioles had a terrible starting rotation that can only improve in 2010.’*

replicate it in 2010. Bergesen pitches to contact and is a groundball machine, projecting to be a solid mid-to-back of the rotation starter. Brian Matusz is the future ace of the Orioles. He made 8 starts for the O’s in 2009, the last of which was a domination of the Yankees in New York the memory of which has kept Orioles fans warm over the winter. Chris Tillman will be just 22 in 2010 and has good movement on his fastball and a great curve, but he’ll have to improve his command if he wants to find success.

If all goes right with the Orioles in 2010 they’ll break their 12 year streak of losing seasons and be poised to play with the big boys in 2011. Without the resources to compete with the Yankees and Red Sox financially, the Orioles are banking on the success of their young players, especially the pitchers. It’s a gamble to be sure but if it pans out, the Orioles will have the core to play competitive baseball for years to come.

# Blue Jays in Midst of Rebuilding Young Team

*by Tom Dakers, BluebirdBanter.com*

What's happened with the Jays this off-season? Well, I know this is going to come as a surprise to you, but the Jays traded Roy Halladay. Yeah, I know, they did it without it getting out to the media at all. That's why you have to follow us bloggers to get the real news. Trading Doc was the start of rebuilding the team. We got three really good prospects for him: pitcher Kyle Drabek, who the Jays wanted for Roy at the trade deadline, catcher Travis d'Arnaud and right fielder Michael Taylor. Taylor they shipped off to Oakland for Brett Wallace, a power hitting 3B/1B type. None of the three are expected to make an impact this season

What else have the Jays done? We shipped reliever Brandon League and an outfield prospect to Seattle for Brandon Morrow, who is expected to start for the Jays. We allowed a couple of free agents to leave. Your Red Sox got Marco Scutaro when we signed your shortstop from the end of last year, Alex Gonzalez. You got the better part of that switch -- you will love Scutaro. We also let Rod Barajas leave, though no one seems to want him (you think the .265 OBP has anything to do with his lack of suitors?) and signed John Buck to catch, exchanging one low average, mid-range power catcher for another.

Offensively not much else has changed. Lyle Overbay is still at first, Aaron Hill at second, Edwin Encarnacion will play third. Some combination of Adam Lind, Travis Snider, Vernon Wells, Jose Bautista and September sensation Randy Ruiz will play outfield and DH.

Pitching? We seem to be collecting as many arms as possible. We have 27 pitchers on the 40-man roster, at the moment. The rotation? Likely

Shawn Marcum (back from missing last year after Tommy John surgery), Ricky Romero, Brandon Morrow, Marc Rzepczynski and one of Brett Cecil, Dana Eveland, Dustin McGowan, David Purcey, Brian Tallet or 6 or 7 other guys.

The pen? For reasons that escape me we recently signed Kevin Gregg. He will battle Scott Downs and Jason Frasor for the closer role. The rest of the pen will be made

up of Jeremy Accardo, Jesse Carlson, Shawn Camp, Josh Roenicke, Merkin Valdez, Casey Janssen, Zechry Zinicola and Scott Richmond. And/or any of

*‘Our biggest change is we fired fan punching bag, GM JP Riccardi, and promoted Alex Anthopoulos to take his place.’*

the starters that lose out on that battle. Actually, if you can spell fastball the Jays will try you out for the pitching staff.

Our biggest change is we fired fan punching bag, GM JP Riccardi, and promoted Alex Anthopoulos to take his place. Alex is young and has a very different style to JP. He has doubled our number of scouts and wants to improve the Jays from the minors on up. We will see how successful he is over the next few years.

Most ‘experts’ figure we’ll be battling with the Orioles for last place in the East and they are likely right. But that doesn’t mean we won’t have anything to cheer about. Lind and Hill had breakout seasons last year. Travis Snider will look to show that we were right to have him at the top of our prospects list. Vernon Wells should bounce back some after having wrist surgery in the off-season. And we have a lot of good young pitchers that will be fun to watch. And we have some really good looking prospects that could make the team in 2011. So the future looks good even if 2010 looks like it will be less than fun.

# ***For Rays, it's 'One Chance, One Moment'***

*by Steve Slowinski, DRaysBay.com*

Recently, every time I think about the 2010 Rays a rather odd phrase keeps popping into my head. It's not a phrase you're likely to hear cast about in the clubhouse or used in any newspaper column, but it's one that strikes me as remarkably descriptive and fitting.

That phrase? Ichi-go ichi-e.

For those of you unfamiliar with Japanese, "Ichi-go ichi-e" is a phrase commonly used in the martial arts and in tea ceremonies. It translates generally to "One Chance, One Moment", reminding everyone that this one moment in time is entirely unique. Look around you right now. You only have the chance to be living this exact moment in time once; are you living that moment in a way you want? Ignore the past, ignore the future – all that matters is this one moment that you are living right now. Immerse in the moment and become lost in the present.

As you may or may not know, this is a seminal year for the Rays. With contracts expiring for Carl Crawford, Carlos Pena, Pat Burrell, Rafael Soriano, Grant Balfour, and Dan Wheeler, there is going to be a very high turnover going into the 2011 season. Not that the turnover is going to harm the Rays' competitiveness necessarily – with a large influx of prospects like Jeremy Hellickson and Desmond Jennings ready to go, the Rays look to be just as strong in 2011 – but this is the last season that we Rays fans can expect to see the familiar nucleus intact. This is the last season to win with Crawford and Pena aboard and the Rays need to make the most of it.

Recognizing the high turnover coming up in 2011, the Rays' front office decided to go all in this past off-season. Instead of shedding payroll by

trading Crawford and/or Bartlett like many were expecting, the Rays instead went out and traded for a \$7 million closer in Rafael Soriano. They brought back Gabe Kapler, almost got Milton Bradley, filled the hole at catcher by trading for Kelly Shoppach, and signed low-cost, high-upside guys like Joaquin Benoit. The Rays' payroll is now the highest it has ever been and the roster is stocked with talent and depth to the gills.

All of these moves have sent a very clear message to Rays' fans: the time is NOW. Ichi-go ichi-e. No-holds barred. Boston and New York both have stacked rosters as well,

but most projection systems have placed the Rays within a win or two of them both, well within striking distance.

Sure, it will take some luck for the Rays to be able to make the playoffs, but luck is one

thing that the Yankees and Red Sox cannot buy. The Rays have put themselves in the best position they can for a playoff push and now we just have to see how it all unfolds.

So there it is. The Rays are going to be underrated by everyone going into this season because of their finish last year and the fact that they didn't have a showy off-season, but the truth of the matter is that this team has a deep roster that has the potential to compete with the likes of Boston and New York all season long. Don't dare count us out or you may find yourselves sitting at home come October.

One chance, one moment. Ichi-go ichi-e.

*'All of these moves have sent a very clear message to Rays' fans: the time is NOW. Ichi-go ichi-e. No-holds barred.'*

# Over the Monster 2010 Staff Predictions

*The members of the writing staff at Over the Monster make their predictions for the 2010 season. Remember to check back in November to laugh at how far off their guesses were.*

	<i>Randy Booth</i>	<i>0157H7</i>	<i>Ben Buchanan</i>	<i>Logan Lietz</i>	<i>wolf9309</i>
<i>How many games will the Red Sox win this season?</i>	96	95	95	97	98
<i>How will the top three finish in the AL East?</i>	1. Red Sox 2. Yankees 3. Rays	1. Yankees 2. Red Sox 3. Rays	1. Red Sox 2. Yankees 3. Rays	1. Yankees 2. Red Sox 3. Rays	1. Red Sox 2. Yankees 3. Rays
<i>Who will be the Red Sox's MVP?</i>	Josh Beckett	Adrian Beltre	Kevin Youkilis	Kevin Youkilis	Jon Lester
<i>What will be the biggest surprise for the Red Sox in 2010?</i>	Scutaro's positive production, both offensively and defensively	Cameron will really impress with plus defense and power at the plate	Big production from bottom three in lineup	Contributions from Cameron	How well Buchholz will pitch
<i>AL MVP?</i>	Kevin Youkilis	Evan Longoria	Mark Teixeira	Mark Teixeira	Evan Longoria
<i>AL Cy Young?</i>	Felix Hernandez	Jon Lester	Zack Greinke	Josh Beckett	Jon Lester
<i>NL MVP?</i>	Adrian Gonzalez	Chase Utley	Albert Pujols	Albert Pujols	Albert Pujols
<i>NL Cy Young?</i>	Roy Halladay	Johan Santana	Roy Halladay	Roy Halladay	Roy Halladay

# Red Sox Predictions in 140 Characters or Less

*We wanted Red Sox fans to make their predictions for the 2010 Red Sox over Twitter, the newest social media sensation. In 140 characters or less, this is how fans are feeling about the new season.*

**Samesty84** Sox will win AL East & 100 Games

**danilohatori** Red Sox will get the Wild Card, but this will be the Next Year again, and we go all the way sweep (again) in WS!

**TormentedSoxFan** AL East results  
1. Boston 2. NY 3. Baltimore 4. Toronto 5. Tampa Bay

**brogshan** I predict Papi plays well enough to get his option next year declined, but renegotiates a low dollar two year deal to end his career.

**jasonh\_86** Red Sox will win 97 games, win AL East and make it to ALCS.

**Mickerdootz** Tim Wakefield makes 30 starts, wins 15!

**nbajam09** Red Sox 95-85. Lester 17 wins. Beckett 16 wins. Papelbon with 37 saves. V. Mart Offensive player. Beltre and Drew miss time w/ inj.

**itsbostonryan** Youkilis hits 40 home runs and hits over .300

**blogtard** PREDICTION (actual): 98 wins for #RedSox, Ortiz hits .272 with 30

dongs, Beltre delivers bigtime, Clay gets more Ws than Lackey.

**JohnnyGo55** Adrian Beltre = .285 AVG, 97 RBI & 28 HR

**djafterlight** redsox 2010 prediction 1st in al east

**aaronsapp** Sox get in 2 bench clearing brawls(1 with the yanks), beckett gets 21 wins, lester gets 19 wins

**maeamian** Pedroia makes a ridiculous comment that causes much amusement among Red Sox Nation

**keith\_oneil** Mike Cameron will be a bust

**Smitty295** Jacoby Ellsbury will have a breakout year.

**Ryan\_Holdaway** Last second trade at the deadline sends Josh Beckett to Washington in exchange for the entire roster.

**Vetack** Not a single ball lands between Cameron and Jacoby in the outfield all season long

**crabchowdah** The Red Sox will sweep the World Series, just like they do every third year.

# **The Year That Was**

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*Why look forward all the time when you can still look back? Some of the best articles from OTM in the past year are right here, including how to be the best Angels fan possible and defending Daisuke Matsuzaka.*



# **Millions Shocked at Yankees' Tarnished Season**

*by Randy Booth*

*Originally published April 6, 2009*

NEW YORK - Chaos ensued in New York City tonight after a rough start by New York Yankees' pitcher CC Sabathia resulted in the Bronx Bombers' first loss of the season.

Sabathia allowed six runs in 4.1 innings against the Orioles who went on to easily win the game 10-5. As soon as the game finished, a state of emergency was issued in New York.

"At this time we feel the best course of action would be to bring the state police in to patrol the streets for the next 48 hours," said Mayor Michael Bloomberg. "Our resources will be maxed out, but we feel it's 100 percent necessary."

Many fans took to the streets after the epic loss.

"I just can't believe it. We worked so hard this offseason and now it's over. It's all over," said 27-year-old fan Nicolas Richard. "I won't be able to watch SportsCenter for at least three months."

Since the loss, 32 deaths have been reported in the city. Thirty-one of those people were wearing some kind of Yankee apparel, including four with "Sabathia" authentic jerseys. The last death was of a Ben James, a 24-year-old Red Sox fan. The cause of death is unknown at this point, but witnesses say he laughed to death when Sabathia was pulled from the game.

Despite 161 games remaining on the schedule, Yankee fans are struggling to grasp tonight's events.

"When's the firesale start?" asked Mike Thompson, 38. "Why carry this payroll during a losing season? It's hopeless. Let's just trade for some overhyped prospects, get all our money back and then spend it wisely this offseason. Hey! I hear Matt Holliday might be available!"

Tammy Wayne, an advertising director for a company in New York, was speechless for 20 straight minutes after the game.

“...” she shook her head. “...what happened?”

With the Yankees 0-1 to start the season, John Pazzari, a plumber, was confused after the loss.

“Wait. If they lost, how are they going to go 162-0?” he said. “I’m no math wizard, but I’m pretty sure it’s almost close to impossible to go undefeated after losing a couple of games.”

Word of the outcry quickly reached Baltimore, where both Sabathia and Yankees head coach Joe Girardi issued statements.

“This is obviously not something we planned for,” Girardi said.

“I was told that money buys happiness and ... I’m just not happy right now. I was lied to.

“This is an organization that prides itself on two things: money and mon-- I mean, winning. And when the latter is compromised because of the former, it’s just bad. This is not the Yankee way and I apologize.”

Sabathia, with his left arm wrapped in ice, held together by dollar bills stapled together, wasn’t happy with his performance.

“I thought I was a good pitcher. I want all the Yankee fans out there to believe me when I say that. But, c’mon. I was an Indian. I was a Brewer, for christ’s sake!” he said. “How the hell can they give me that type of money and not expect me to suck?”

Mark Teixeira, who was projected to hit 162 home runs this season by most intelligent Yankee fans, also met with the press after the game.

“I blame my wife,” Teixeira said, who went 0-for-4 on the day. “If it

*‘Since the loss, 32 deaths have been reported in the city. Thirty-one of those people were wearing some kind of Yankee apparel...’*

wasn't for her, I'd be a Red Sox and bashing home runs and drinking whiskey before games. What the hell is so great about New York?"

Alex Rodriguez, who was considered the Yankee savior before he played a single game in pinstripes, issued a statement via e-mail to multiple New York press outlets after the game.

"Ha!"

*Editor's Note: I tried my damndest to write like my satire hero, E-Coli. If I failed epicly, just put a picture from fail blog in the comments. I'll understand.*

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*Randy Booth is the managing editor of OverTheMonster.com.*

# ***The Pawtucket Red Sox Roster Crunch***

*by Ben Buchanan*

*Originally published June 16, 2009*

When doing Minor Lines on an average night, Pawtucket is the least interesting team to look at. The notable names on offense, up till the promotion of Aaron Bates, were all guys who were likely to be bench players at best in their career. Chris Carter, Dusty Brown, Jeff Bailey, Jonathan Van Every. Talented ball players who often rank amongst the elite at AAA, but can't seem to take the next step and enter the world of the Majors.

Portland, on the other hand, is perhaps the most interesting team. Lars Anderson and Josh Reddick were the obvious standouts coming into the year. Wagner has exploded onto the scene with Aaron Bates. Ryan Kalish was promoted after only a month in Salem to start the year, and has slowly but surely begun to adapt to the tougher competition (.308/.325/.385 in June vs. .133/.212/.233 in May). Even less noticeable guys have performed, as 26-year-old Bubba Bell was promoted to Pawtucket today.

When a player is promoted in the minor leagues, much like in the Majors, there always has to be a counter move. Someone has to be traded, released, sent to the DL, promoted or demoted in order to make space. With such a large wave of players having legitimate shots at Pawtucket, and such a large amount of guys seemingly stuck at AAA, the Red Sox are faced with an obvious problem. Who stays, who goes, and what do we do with those who go?

Dusty Brown and Carlos Maldonado share duties behind the plate. They both share similar skill sets—good defensively, mediocre offensively—but Maldonado is a 30-year-old recent signing while Dusty Brown is a 26-year-old who has spent the last 8 years in the Red Sox farm system.

Brown could also possibly carry some value down the line as a backup catcher once Wakefield decides to hang up his glove, so when Mark Wagner inevitably comes knocking, expect Maldonado to get the boot.

If Jorge Jimenez makes the jump sooner rather than later, the Sox will have an interesting choice. The PawSox have 3 players who can all play 2B, SS, and 3B in Gil

Velazquez, Angel

Chavez, and Travis

Denker. Velazquez

and Chavez are simi-

lar players. Both are

older (29 and 27 re-

spectively) with good

gloves and mediocre

bats. Chavez is better offensively, while Velazquez can also play all outfield positions. Travis Denker is something of a defensive liability, but is only

23 and has a somewhat better bat. The organization will probably elect to

keep Denker due to his age and offense, but the choice between Chavez and Velazquez is harder. With the value the Sox put on versatility in the minor

leagues, though, Velazquez seems to have an edge up.

The most crowded positions, though, are the 1B/DH and Outfield positions. Pawtucket currently rotates a trio of Jeff Bailey, Aaron Bates, and Paul McAnulty through the corner outfield and 1B positions with Jeff Natale, Freddy Guzman, and Chris Carter (usually at the DH) getting occasional turns. Currently on the DL, Zach Daeges and Jonathan Van Every are also often slotted in. Sometime next year, though, it's not at all unlikely that a majority of these spots will be filled by players currently in Portland. Lars Anderson and Josh Reddick will replace Jeff Bailey and Paul McAnulty in the starting group. Kalish will take over at center field, with Reddick seeing some starts there too.

*‘Over the last few years, Pawtucket has stagnated a little ... there has been an established core of AAAA position players who every so often get their shot at a cup of coffee.’*

If the Sox think they can get value for any of the guys currently in the group, they'll likely ship them off. Jeff Bailey, Chris Carter, and Jonathan Van Every are the most familiar names on the list, and the ones most likely to get some small returns. On the other hand, they're also the ones most likely to start the year with the Major League club. Depending on the future of Rocco Baldelli, Nick Green, Julio Lugo, and Mark Kotsay (not to mention David Ortiz), the Red Sox could quickly find themselves in need of a new 4th outfielder or backup middle infielder. Bubba Bell would likely be one of the top candidates for a trade. It seems Bailey and Carter might again be fighting for a job next season, but without a spot at Pawtucket to fall back on. And if the Sox resign any of their current backups or add a few veterans in the offseason, then there could be no room for anyone.

Over the last few years, Pawtucket has stagnated a little. Aside from a few major players moving up (Pedroia, Ellsbury, Lowrie), there has been an established core of AAAA position players who every so often get their shot at a cup of coffee. Now, the core seems destined to be broken up. Already, Chip Ambres was traded to the Mets and Sandy Madera was released. For some, the change will mean new opportunities. Whether with the Red Sox or another team, some of them certainly have the ability to at least be major league backups. For others, it will be just another move in a long series of moves in their long minor league careers. And for some more it may just be the end of the road. But for the Red Sox, it will mean a vast well of talent on the very edge of the making the Majors, and a much more interesting PawSox box score.

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*Ben Buchanan is an editor at OverTheMonster.com.*

# *In Defense of Daisuke*

*by 0157H7*

*Originally published June 17, 2009*

On this site and across the web, there's been a lot of ire directed at the Phenom from Nippon, Daisuke Matsuzaka. People are so angry at his performance this season that they are talking about drastic moves: trade him, bench him, throw him on the disabled list with a phantom injury. But is this anger really justified?

Let's take a look at two players, seven starts into their respective seasons.

*Player 1: 7 g, 2-5 record, 38.1 innings, 32 R, 6 HR, 18 BB, 37 K, 7.51 ERA*

*Player 2: 7 g, 1-4 record, 31 innings, 26 R, 7 HR, 14 BB, 32 K, 7.55 ERA*

Not terribly impressive. If a callup from Pawtucket was throwing that poorly, he'd be sent down to AAA faster than you can say "There are two Hs in Buchholz." So who are these players?

Player 2 is Daisuke Matsuzaka. Player 1 is C C Sabathia, 7 games into 2008. As you may recall, Sabathia went on to pitch 253 innings for the season with a 2.70 ERA. He was so good in Milwaukee that some people suggested him for the Cy Young award.

Daisuke has had a disappointing start to the season, but we need to remember that his season is still in the early stages. While he is unlikely to have the sort of success that CC did, there is no reason that he cannot be better than he is now.

What is behind the ire towards Matsuzaka? Well, the sort of performances he gives are difficult to watch. Most baseball fans hate walks, frequent bases-loaded situations, and 5 or 6 inning starts. We prefer the Josh Becketts and Curt Schillings of the game, who barely walk anyone. Com-

pared to them, Dice-BB Walksuwalka doesn't look so good.

But last year, at least, Dice-K was very reliable. You could count on him for 5-6 innings, 0-2 runs. I would take a 2008 start by Matsuzaka over a start by 2008 Beckett every time. With Beckett, who had a much better FIP and by many qualitative measures was the better player, the Red Sox had a losing record (13-14) while he was on the mound. Part of that was lousy run support, but he also was prone to giving up big home runs. His performance wasn't what you'd want out of the staff ace.

Getting back to Matsuzaka, three years into his MLB career, we don't really know what kind of pitcher he is. He excels in Japanese and WBC baseball, but something about the Major Leagues - perhaps the ball, maybe tougher competition, is holding him back. It's not too late for him to turn his season around, just ask Sabathia about bad starts. More importantly, it's not too late for him to turn his MLB career around.

*'He excels in Japanese and WBC baseball, but something about the Major Leagues ... is holding him back.'*

Some people on OTM have said Dice-K's pitches are just bad and that he is not cut out for the majors. Fangraphs provides some insight on the relative strength of Dice-K's arsenal. Last year, his fastball was 3.1 runs above average, his cutter was 3.5 runs above average, and his slider was 15 runs above average. This year, all those values are down, although the slider, cutter and curve are close to league average. In 2007, his first year in MLB, Dice-K's best pitches were his slider (2.1 runs a.avg.) and cutter (8.9 runs a.avg.). Claiming Dice-K doesn't have major-league quality pitches, and is accordingly a bad pitcher, doesn't fit the evidence.

We should also consider that Dice-K is suffering, like the rest of the team, from atrocious defense behind him. Even with some improved perfor-



mance lately (Green's #s at SS have gotten better) the team is still 4th worst in baseball in UZR and UZR/150.

All of Dice-K's stats are retrospective, and they incorporate recovering from the WBC as well as coming off the DL. In baseball, past isn't always prologue, especially with a unique pitcher like Dice-K. I have a lot of confidence that he'll get stronger and pitch better as the season progresses. There is no need for a panic move.

Furthermore, even if Dice-K isn't tearing through lineups, his presence on the team is valuable. He helps to draw Japanese talent in - Junichi Tazawa is an example. Yu Darvish, a 22-year-old starter from Japan, may be the next target, and having a Japanese superstar already on board may help convince him to sign on with the Sox.

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*0157H7 is an editor for OverTheMonster.com.*

# How to be a HaloFan, Vol. I

by 0157H7

*Originally published Sept. 17, 2009*

Everyone knows the joys of being a Yankee Fan. Everyone who bought my book series, that is. But for discerning individuals, did you know that there is an EVEN BETTER FANBASE TO BE A PART OF? Did you ever wonder what it would be like to COMPLAIN OF EAST COAST BIAS? Are your eyes yearning to see a MONKEY PRANCING AROUND IN A DIAPER? Do you want to LEARN HOW TO WORSHIP BASERUNNING and BURN SABERMETRICIANS AT THE STAKE? Well read on for our Responsible Subcontractor's SPECIAL, ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OFFER!!!!

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Dearest Esteammmed Dignitary of Untied States,

My name is Mr. Esughugowi Coli. I am literary Nobel Prizewinner of Nigeria. My country is torn apart by war and class-divisions. Everyone I know is either unemployed, a violent gangbunger, or a snobby, bloated plutocrat. Naturally, I am a fan of the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim of America. I write to you with a lucrative business offer.

Over the course of my many years of being an Angel fan, I have learned the in's and ow's of being an Angel fan. My precise wisdom can be distilled to you in a lucrative venture, which in no way is a wired fraud scam. Simply deposit \$5!000;00 in my Ebanking account (UserID: Theo Epstein) and I will send, at no extra cost to you, a hard-bound, leather edition of my award-winning, Nobel Peace-Prize-receiving book:

StealingMoneyBall: How to be a HaloFan, Vol.1

“But, Mr. Esughugowi,” you say. “Of how can I be certain that this book is the righteous fury of Angels that it surely comports to be.” “Well,” say me, “out of the generosity and egregious munificence of my heart, I shall send to you a chapter of this splendid work.” To which you reply, “Oh, merciful and kind Coli, your boundless sweetness forces me to deposit \$5!000;00 in your online bank account.”

***StealingMoneyBall: How to be a HaloFan, Vol.1***  
***Chapter 15 (pa. 3) Angels Rules***

Dude, so you like, totally should be an Angel fan by now. But if ur not, that’s cool. Me and my bros gotta hurl. Don’t want a hangover in Algebra class. Oh, check out these rad rules for analyzing the sport of baseball:

***1. Mike Scioscia = The MAN.***

DOOD, Scioscia is the MAN. I mean, he’s the MAN. Okay, so maybe he doesn’t play, and maybe he makes people run into outs. And maybe he makes hitters suicide squeeze bunt when the infield is drawn in and the playoffs are on the line. But that’s just a sign of how brilliant he is. Only a genius like Sosh would be smart enough to turn a \$100 million team with a killer farm system into a small ball National League squad.

***2. Tony Reagins = NINJA***

OMG, Reagins is like ninja. He makes that word into all parts of speech. Noun: “Reagins is the ninja.” Verb: “Five more centerfielders! He NINJAed that deal to death, man!” Adjective: “Reagins is totally ninja.” Adverb: Reagins is a ninja awesome ninja.” Conjunction: “Ninja Erick Aybar ninja.” Put it all together, and you get total sentences:

“Ninja Napoli ninjas ninja laid ninja ninjaing East Coast bias ninja BoSUX ninja ninja ALDS Elimination Game ninja ninja 2010 frickin NINJA!”

### ***3. The Angels always win.***

So dood, you gotta know the Angels are radically total in their awesomeness. They, like, win every friggin game. So there’s almost, like, no reason to even watch the postseason. Everyone knows that the Angels play in the toughest division in baseball - the Rangers, Mariners, and A’s would each win like a thousand games in the AL-Least.

*‘Dood, knowing these rules, you will make a totally awesome Angel fan!’*

### ***4. Boston only beats the Angels in the playoffs because of non-baseball reasons.***

Anyone with sense knows that the Red Sox are a worse team than the Halos. And nobody knows this better than John “Rally Flunky” Lackey, who declared in 2008, after his team had bunted, squeezed, blown-saved and error’ed its way to a 1-3 ALDS series loss:

“We lost to a team that’s not better than us. We are a better team than they are.”

Radical truth. But why is this true? Well, there are several reasons that a perennial world beater is tripped up by Boston chumps:

#### ***4a) East Coast Bias***

Mind control rays emanating out of ESPN world headquarters in New York cause Angels to make errors, fans to cheer for the Red Sox, and Boston Left Fielders to hit home runs off of Halo closers. Secret ESPN fluoridation causes Erick Aybar to miss his bunt. And the ESPN-controlled media ignore the accomplishments of a team that has consistently won the biggest prize in baseball - the AL West division title.

#### ***4b) New Yankeeism / Evil Imperialism***

Why have the Superhuman Angels, protectors of Truth, Justice and the American way, been thwarted? Why have the Angels, Team of Steel, failed to advance to November glory? The clear answer is because Theo Epstein took over control of the Legion of Doom from Steinbrenner. He then piled green Kryptonite high into the Left Field wall, thus the “Green Monster,” and even created an animatronic mobile Kryptonite delivery system, codenamed Wally.

#### ***4c) Steroids***

The Red Sox are the juiciest juicers that ever juiced their juice. Sure, maybe 17 Angels players are known to have used steroids. But the Sox had Manny Ramirez and David Ortiz on the juice. While the Angels clubhouse may have been a veritable opium den of PEDs, it only won them one World Series, so it doesn’t count. At all. Troy Glaus, World Series MVP, doesn’t count as much as Manny-Ortiz. And obviously George Mitchell was responsible for covering up the other Sox steroid users!

Dood, knowing these rules, you will make a totally awesome Angel fan! Now, me and the rest of the 9th grade wrestling team are going into the woods to get drunk, and then we’re going to rock out on the internet! AngelsFan for Life! Cradle 2 ALDS Game 3, yo!

Dearest investor, having read a sample of my book, which is assuredly written by me, you respectfully must deposit \$5!000;00 in my checking account. The rest of the book will be delivered to you by trusted messengers, who, out of modesty, must not be named online. Thank you most generously for your time.

I remain your;s,

Mr. Esughugowi Coli,

Honorable Nigerian Cultural Representative

Valued and Trustworthy Businessman

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*0157H7 is an editor for OverTheMonster.com.*

# ***For Once, Theo Epstein's Puzzle Pieces Do Not Fit***

*by Randy Booth*  
*Originally published Aug. 17, 2009*

Theo Epstein has always had a knack at making the right moves. Granted, it doesn't work all the time -- because really, how can it? -- but nine times out of 10, you can count on Epstein making a move that will undoubtedly help the club.

I'm starting to think 2009 may be his worst year yet.

It seems like every year since, say, 2004 or so, the Red Sox have just needed to acquire the "puzzle pieces" to cap off a great team. It's getting that one middle piece with a sliver of blue on it and a chunk of a red -- kinda looks like a flower -- to put it all together and complete that 25-piece puzzle.

This year's puzzle pieces have that blue and red, but they just ain't the right shapes.

Since the Sox have started to make mid-season moves, there's been a lot of head scratching.

First there was Adam LaRoche. That was an understandable move for the most part because the Sox needed offense -- even more-so than they do now.

LaRoche was still a wonder though because he's a starting-caliber first baseman and the Sox, no matter how bad the offense was, couldn't start him. Unless there was an injury, LaRoche would find a lot of his time occupied by spitting sunflower seeds from the top bench in Fenway.

That fact that puzzle piece did not fit was quickly realized as he was traded nine days later for Casey Kotchman. That's where we find another oddly-shaped puzzle piece.

Kotchman is an upgrade over LaRoche in terms of fitting in the

offense, but it's still not a great solution. Kotchman is considered a better "bench player," per se, because the word is he'd take to that better than LaRoche. OK, sure. He automatically is a better fit in the roster, even if he isn't a better hitter than LaRoche.

I want to point out that just because a player isn't regarded better than another, it doesn't mean that it's a worse fit. Remember the greatest puzzle piece in Red Sox history?

Sure you do, because now he's one of the hardest-to-listen-to broadcasters in Sox history.

Dave Roberts. Roberts didn't do anything too amazing, but he was fast. He played solid defense, but he couldn't really hit too much. But he worked in the

offense just beautifully. And while I'm on it, thanks again for '04, D-Rob.

So Kotchman is a better fit, but it's still not a great fit. With Kotchman on board July 31, plus the addition of Victor Martinez on the same day, an instant logjam is created at first base.

As of right now, the Sox have four players on the current roster that can feasibly play first base: Kevin Youkilis, David Ortiz, Martinez and Kotchman. While Youkilis and Martinez have versatility, that's still too many damn first basemen.

We can also talk about players like Brian Anderson, Chris Woodward and Alex Gonzalez (while they do seem to fit a tad better), the bottom line is that Epstein is making moves and they don't seem to be panning out.

So why is our genius GM making these moves? The only thing I can really think of is that someone's desperate.

The Sox have struggled all season long, really. I can only remember one really good stretch and that came at the beginning of the season. But it

*'I want to point out that just because a player isn't regarded better than another, it doesn't mean that it's a worse fit.'*



seems like once one thing got off on the wrong foot (maybe that could be the LaRoche-Kotchman situation), everything else just followed slipping down the hill.

Moves like trading for Gonzalez or designating John Smoltz for assignment could, in some way, cry of desperate measures. Epstein is trying to build a winning team, but it seems like everything that he's tried has had no effect on the club.

It's like having 10 dumb kids all in the same class -- it doesn't matter where they sit in the classroom, because they're still 10 dumb kids.

Epstein can shuffle the lineup all he wants. He can call up whomever from Pawtucket to try and make a spark. But at this point in the season, nothing has worked. This, of course, doesn't rule out the fact that a combination could work. While it's possible -- and has seemed to work in previous years -- I just don't think it's very likely.

However, there's still time. I want to see Epstein use his magical powers to somehow bring a shortstop to the team that can hit the ball. I'm sure he has a magic wand or something that can do that. Maybe he could bring in a starting pitcher that pitches like Josh Beckett and Jon Lester, but isn't Beckett or Lester.

Just maybe.

In the meantime, I say we jam those freakin' puzzle pieces in and make them fit.

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*Randy Booth is the managing editor of OverTheMonster.com.*

# **Don't Blame Bucknor: Sox Lost Game One Themselves**

*by Randy Booth*

*Originally published Oct. 9, 2009*

It would be really easy to write that umpire C.B. Bucknor is a horrible umpire that blew two calls tonight that swayed the momentum into the Angels' favor. It would be really easy to write that games -- especially ones in the postseason -- should not be decided by umpires. It would be really easy.

But it's not the reason why the Red Sox lost tonight.

Let's get this out of the way early, though: no matter what team you root for, you can say that Bucknor blew two easy calls. One was a Kevin Youkilis tag of Howie Kendrick. The other was a Youkilis tag of first base, with Kendrick running on the play. Bucknor called Kendrick safe for both. I don't care how tight you hold your Rally Monkey at night, we can all agree those were blown plays.

With that said, it doesn't really matter.

The Red Sox didn't hit the ball -- Torii Hunter did. The Red Sox didn't really pressure John Lackey -- Bobby Abreu, single-handedly, pressured Jon Lester. The Red Sox lost. The Angels won.

Not only did the Angels win, but they shut out the Red Sox, 5-0. Instead of looking at what the Sox did wrong tonight, let's look at what they did right.

What did they do right?

The offense managed four hits all game, all off Lackey in his 7.1 innings of work. Lackey looked like a fat Roy Halladay out on the mound. Darren Oliver, who worked the final 1.2 innings, looked like a circa-1996 Heathcliff Slocumb.

Lackey isn't an amazing pitcher, but he certainly toyed with the Sox

all night. He threw a ton of pitches (115), but it also didn't seem like he struggled to get any outs. Lackey is a pitcher that works off of adrenaline -- if you give him the upper hand, he takes it and slashes your throat with it. That happened tonight.

On the flipside, Jon Lester could not find the strikezone. He walked four batters in his 6 innings of work. That's completely unacceptable.

You should not win a post-season game if your ace is giving up four walks in six innings. Five strikeouts is fine, but you can't walk batters and expect to win a ballgame cleanly. One thing is for sure: if Lester walked, say, only one batter, this would have been a completely different game.

*'The Red Sox didn't hit the ball -- Torii Hunter did. The Red Sox didn't really pressure John Lackey -- Bobby Abreu, single-handedly, pressured Jon Lester. The Red Sox lost. The Angels won.'*

Still, though, Hunter hit that bomb. And it was a bomb. I'm not a fan of Torii Hunter (unlike everyone else in the world, it seems) but there certainly was nothing cheap about that. Kudos, Mr. Hunter. You deserved to trot around the bases.

And that's about it, folks. We can't complain about Bucknor (well, we can, but it's not going to make this loss feel any better). The only thing we can do is hope the Sox learned something from this.

I, for one, hope the Sox learned a few things: 1) you can't dink around with this team. The Angels are good, but no one can afford to walk any player four times, let alone Abreu. 2) don't put the game in the ump's hands. Sure, Bucknor blew it bad, and there were some questionable calls behind the plate, but why even get it to that point? Pound the strike zone,

get the strikeouts. Throw the ball on a line. Take Bucknor out of the game (which will be difficult considering he's behind the plate for game two).

Lastly, No. 3: the Red Sox are a much better team than we saw tonight. Much better. This was a bush-league effort from them tonight. We didn't really see much emotion out of them until the screwjobs cropped up late in the game. Carry that into tomorrow's game and mash the hell out of Jered Weaver. Make him wish he was his brother -- which would take a helluva a beating to accomplish.

What we saw tonight was not Boston Red Sox baseball. And if that Boston Red Sox baseball doesn't show up Friday night, you can kiss any chance of a November duck parade goodbye.

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*Randy Booth is the managing editor for OverTheMonster.com.*

# ***The 2009 Off Season's Impact on the Future***

*by Logan Lietz*

*Originally published Dec. 20, 2009*

The Red Sox, beleaguered by talks of a 'bridge period' earlier this off season, caught fans slightly by surprise with their recent flurry of activity within the MLB's Hot Stove Market. Marco Scutaro's arrival in Boston may not have warranted much commotion given the nature of his contract (the length in particular), but the lucrative 5-year deal awarded to pitcher John Lackey has some questioning the exact direction that general manager Theo Epstein is taking the club and the future of pitcher Josh Beckett in particular.

After a very quiet beginning to the Winter Meetings, the Red Sox designated nearly \$25 million for next season's payroll with the additions of Mike Cameron and John Lackey alone, moves that will certainly effect those that subsequently follow -- both this season as well as the next.

What does this mean for the likes of Josh Beckett and Victor Martinez, both with expiring contracts, especially considering the addition of Lackey and the potential free-agency of catcher Joe Mauer? With over \$50 million in expiring contracts coming off the books following this season, how will management approach the free-agent class of 2010, considered by many to be one of the deepest of its kind in relation to available impact players? If this season is still considered a bridge to the future, then what can fans expect to see from the front office at this time next year?

At the moment, Boston's payroll is hovering around the \$170 million dollar mark for the 2010 season (which includes the money owed to former shortstop Julio Lugo). The following players are in the final year of their current contracts; David Ortiz, Mike Lowell, Josh Beckett, Victor Martinez,

Jason Varitek, and Julio Lugo -- contracts that total \$55 million. Assuming that Boston doesn't restructure any of the deals involving the aforementioned players, that gives management a large sum of financial freedom to address the incoming class of free-agents, a group that boasts talent trumping that which is offered in this year's crop.

Many have likened the situation to that which resulted in the Red Sox's 2007 World Series Championship. Prior to that season Epstein spent nearly \$210 million (\$209.1 to be exact) in acquiring J.D. Drew, Julio Lugo, and Daisuke Matsuzaka.

Again, with the assumption that none of the following players are awarded new deals during the upcoming season, here's a look at the free-agent class of 2010: Joe Mauer, Carl Crawford, Lance Berkman, Cliff Lee, Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera, Carlos Pena, Brandon Webb, Jayson Werth. It's a safe bet that someone like Jeter will be retained by the Yankees, but even that scenario leaves a slew of All-Star caliber talent available for the taking.

Similar to last season when the Yankees cleared themselves of nearly \$70 million in contractual commitments that led to the signings of C.C. Sabathia, A.J. Burnett, and Mark Teixeira, and ultimately a World Series Championship, Boston will find themselves in a very enviable position heading into next year's Hot Stove action.

It's a safe bet that Boston decides to let the contracts of Varitek and Lowell expire, but what about Josh Beckett and Victor Martinez?

After the signing of John Lackey, Theo Epstein immediately sent a text message assuring Josh Beckett that the addition of Lackey will in no way effect Boston's interest in re-signing him. However, we've seen this before, and nobody can blame Beckett for remaining skeptical regardless of how convincing Epstein may have appeared.

After acquiring Curt Schilling in 2003, management sent a similar message to then staff-ace Pedro Martinez, who also found himself entering

a contract year at that time. Martinez was not a member of the Red Sox in 2005 as management was never able to work out a deal to retain the right-hander, leading many to question Beckett's future in Boston.

John Lackey received a 5-year deal worth \$82.5 million dollars this off-season, raising speculation as to how serious the team is about keeping Beckett. It's hard to ignore the likenesses between Lackey and Beckett as pitchers, and with Lackey receiving a contract similar to that which Beckett is expected to command;

did Boston simply sign Lackey to replace Beckett upon his departure? The situation is eerily similar to that which led to the end of the 'Pedro Era' in Boston.

Victor Martinez is considered a very valuable commodity amongst the Red Sox's

lineup. Martinez's ability to play both catcher and first base at a high level makes him just that much more appealing to the Red Sox, who currently owe him just under \$8 million this season, making him widely considered one of the best bargains in baseball.

However, there has been a lot of discussion recently surrounding the potential trading of first baseman Adrian Gonzalez to the Red Sox by the San Diego Padres. If that happens, how will it effect the way in which Boston approaches Martinez's expiring contract? With the versatile slugger likely to command big money in the open market, will Theo then shift his focus to Joe Mauer, assuming that he isn't re-signed by Minnesota this season?

With Gonzalez coming to Boston in this scenario, Martinez's ability to play first base becomes less relevant in relation to addressing the team's

*'Did Boston simply sign Lackey to replace Beckett upon his departure? The situation is eerily similar to that which led to the end of the 'Pedro Era' in Boston.'*

need for a catcher. It's no secret that Theo loves the type of player that Mauer embodies, and with good reason, as Mauer is regarded as one of the best all-around talents in baseball. Martinez is an ample catcher, but Mauer is a great one. Couple that with the upgrade that Mauer would represent offensively as opposed to V-Mart and it's not a stretch to assume that the Red Sox would rather utilize a good sum of that newly available \$55 million on the former MVP/All-Star/Batting Champion/Gold Glover [Mauer].

On the other hand, it's worth mentioning that there has been some speculation that the Red Sox may plan to invest in both Martinez and Mauer, shifting Victor to first base and affording them a more than acceptable option behind the plate on days that they would decide to rest Mauer. Obviously this scenario becomes more likely in the event that Adrian Gonzalez is not acquired via trade.

Another key element that makes Martinez less of a necessity is the availability of Lance Berkman and Carlos Pena next off season, both viable options to fill the void at first base in the event that Boston is unable to retain Martinez. Similarly, Beckett's contract demands may become less appealing given the pending free-agent status' of pitchers Cliff Lee and Brandon Webb and the newly acquired Lackey.

Jacoby Ellsbury and Clay Buchholz may also find their time in Boston heavily influenced by the free-agent class of 2010 and the moves made to this point in 2009. Both players have been mentioned in discussions surrounding potential trade scenarios involving Adrian Gonzalez. Does Ellsbury become more expendable with Werth and Crawford being available next season, as well as the recent signing of Mike Cameron? Does Buchholz become easier to part with given the potential signing of Aroldis Chapman and the potential free-agency of both Lee and Webb?

Every move that management makes from here on out must be calculated and will be heavily dependent on other deals that are or are not completed. For instance -- the addition of Lackey aside, even the situation at



the catcher position effects the likelihood that starting pitcher Josh Beckett remains with the Red Sox.

Joe Mauer is believed to be in line to receive one of largest contracts in baseball history from whomever he decides to sign with. Therefore, if Martinez opts to explore free-agency and Boston decides to make a push for Mauer, it becomes less likely that they do so successfully while still being able to afford Beckett. Again, John Lackey's signing plays a major role in this as well. It's easier to let Beckett go and pursue Mauer with Lackey locked up for five seasons, and harder to justify retaining Beckett with the same thing in mind.

Going full-circle, it's easier to let Martinez walk with the addition of Gonzalez. In the event that Gonzalez is acquired, it becomes more feasible that Boston goes after Mauer, letting Martinez go and possibly making a concerted effort to retain Beckett.

It is still my belief that the Red Sox are pushing hard to acquire Adrian Gonzalez. In a previous article listed here, I explain that the Red Sox's moves to this point lead me to believe that Gonzalez is the most important player currently on Boston's radar. For one, signing Aroldis Chapman could help justify trading a young pitcher like Buchholz. Also, given the Red Sox's payroll commitments for 2010 and their still-glaring need to acquire a power-hitting corner infielder, the friendly nature of Gonzalez's contract for the next two seasons makes him the most appealing option for Boston if they truly desire an impact player to fill that void while still remaining within the \$170 million dollar payroll goal set by Epstein.

However, the Gonzalez trade would be a blockbuster-type deal and is anything but a certainty. In the event that no progress is made in relation to Gonzalez, I think that Boston will shift their attention away from Beckett for the time being and make Victor Martinez their primary focus this season in terms of restructuring any of the expiring contracts. Talks with Martinez will likely correspond with the progress made by Minnesota in retaining

Mauer. If it appears that Mauer will re-sign, Martinez should become priority number one in Boston. In the event that Mauer and the Twins cannot find common ground, the Red Sox will assess how badly they want to pursue Mauer, whether it be via trade or during the 2010 off season.

The point being that the signing of John Lackey, as well as any move made from this point on, does more than impact the future of Josh Beckett and the outlook of next year's club. Each move shifts the potential makeup of the roster for years to come. The job of a general manager is one of the most stress-inducing positions in sports for a reason and is not for short-sighted individuals. You can bet that Theo Epstein and the rest of the front office are making every move during the course of this off season with the next one in the back of their minds.

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*Logan Lietz is a writer for OverTheMonster.com.*

# Let's Talk About Luxury Tax and the Red Sox

*by wolf9309*

*Originally published Dec. 22, 2009*

One thing that always gets discussed in depth during the offseason is the dreaded MLB Luxury Tax (also Competitive Balance Tax or CBT). There's a lot of easy to misinterpret and just incorrect information out there about what exactly the tax is and how it is calculated.

Theo Epstein has publicly stated that one of his goals for the year is to remain below the Luxury Tax threshold, so since this is going to be a significant factor in the Red Sox offseason, let's take a quick look at what exactly the luxury tax works, and how it is going to affect the Red Sox going into 2010. There are some things here I will gloss over a bit and some things that I will go into depth on because I'm trying to keep this as relevant to the Sox' current situation right now without actually going the 20 pages in the CBA.

First off, let me start by saying that all of this is available in the current MLBPA bargaining agreement, in Article 23, starting on page 83. It's written in legalese, and I'm no lawyer, but I'm doing my best to interpret the relevant parts here for our sake. If anyone else cares to read through it and finds that I'm misinterpreting something, please let me know, I'm not entirely infallible.

First, the thresholds are seen many places and easy to breakdown. The ones remaining are:

**2010:** \$170 Million

**2011:** \$178 Million

## ***TAX RATES***

Now the rates that teams have to pay these rates are 22.5%, 30%, and

40%. Each time a team exceeds the threshold, they have to pay in the next highest bracket, with 40% being the maximum.

For example, if the Marlins went all out and somehow spent an extra \$150 million this offseason, they would exceed the threshold for the first time- this year they would have to pay an extra 22.5% of everything past the threshold. In 2011, however, if their payroll once again exceeded the threshold (\$178 million), they would have to pay an extra 30% for each dollar over the threshold.

There is another side to this which frequently gets left out and is very relevant to the Red Sox at the moment. If a team does NOT exceed the threshold for a year, they drop to the next lowest tax bracket, except that teams stick at the 30% bracket for two years of not being over.

As I said, this is VERY important for the Red Sox. The last time the Sox exceeded the threshold was 2007, when they were subject to the 40% tax bracket. This means that in 2008, they would have again been subject to the 40% rate, but since they were under the threshold, it meant that their bracket lowered. In 2009, they would have been subject to the 30% rate, but again stayed under the threshold. Now, in 2010, if the Red Sox go over the threshold, they will be subject to the 30% rate in 2010 and will jump to the 40% rate in 2011. If, however, they avoid going over \$170 million in 2010, then in 2011, they will only be subject to the 22.5% tax rate.

What does this mean for the Sox? Obviously, it makes it very clear why the Red Sox want to stay under this year- it means that in the future, they will be able to go over for a couple of years without being subject to the rate. If the payroll just barely exceeds the threshold, it still jumps, so since the Sox are likely to only make another couple of moves, it doesn't make sense for them to make a move that will push them just over the threshold. This is one reason why for 2010 the threshold is a huge sticking point.

### ***PAYROLL CALCULATION***

This brings us to another point which is people saying that the team

payroll right now is sitting significantly under \$170 million, so what is even the worry?

There are a few sticking points which greatly affect this.

First, the payroll for the sake of Luxury Tax also includes 1/30 of the total cost of player benefits (the benefits are split between the teams). For 2010's sake this is \$10.5 million.

Second the Luxury Tax is calculated based on contract average value, not the actual year's cost. This means that since Lester signed a 5 year/\$30 million contract, although he is being paid \$3.75 million this year, for the sake of Luxury Tax, he counts as costing \$6 million a year. This number also includes signing bonuses split over the life of the contract, so if a player signed a 3 year/\$3 million contract but was given a \$15 million signing bonus, he would also count as being \$3 million each year for the CBT. So again, backloading or frontloading contracts does not affect the CBT.

Third, the number still includes players salaries we are paying, and includes buyouts of player's options. So this year, the Sox still count as paying Lugo as well as the buyouts of Wagner and Saito. If a player is traded, for the sake of CBT, we count as paying the amount we actually paid- so if the Lowell trade had gone through, we would have been on the hook for \$9 million as far as CBT was concerned, not the full \$12 million. If we trade for a player, we are on the hook for the actual amount we pay them.

Fourth, though this is more minor, when a team brings someone up from the minors, the CBT includes their salary pro-rated for the amount of time they spent with the major league club.

Also, this number includes performance bonuses in players contracts.

Between all these points, it means that although the opening day payroll for the Sox in 2009 was \$ 121,745,999, for the purposes of CBT, it ended up being \$140.5 million. So as you can imagine, the Sox are quite worryingly close to the line right now. The breakdown here seems pretty accurate, though the arbitration numbers are guesses. Also note that the

breakdown only includes \$9 mill for Lowell, meaning the Sox had better shed some salary or they'll be jumping a tax bracket.

### ***WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?***

Not the government, for sure, not that kind of tax. Also not to the poorer teams, as the name Competitive Balance Tax would have you believe. The money goes to an industry growth fund (edited for incorrectness).

The first \$5 million is held in reserve in case the amount is changed and a CBT Refund needs to be issued. If no refund is needed, this is then sent to the Industry Growth Fund

75% of the money goes towards paying players benefits.

25% goes into the Industry Growth Fund, which I can't find tons of info on right now, except that their money goes towards:

- 1. licensing, advertising, marketing*
- 2. International development*
- 3. New Media Technology*
- 4. Community Service*
- 5. Promotion for clubs which have received revenue sharing*

So some of the money DOES in fact go to the smaller market teams. My understanding also is that since they teams split the cost of the benefits and then the CBT goes 75% to paying player benefits, that means that most of the \$26 million the Yankees are paying will go towards paying player benefits, thereby reducing what everyone else is paying, though admittedly by a small amount. This is just my understanding, I could be off on this.

That's my basic quick rundown for now. If anyone has any other thoughts, anything to add, or any questions, put them in here. Hopefully this provides some useful information and some perspective on what the Sox are doing this offseason.

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*wolf9309 is a writer for OverTheMonster.com.*

# **Can the Red Sox Still Hit? Dispelling the Myth of the 'Weakened Offense'**

*by Ben Buchanan*  
*Originally published Jan. 5, 2010*

From the beginning, the Red Sox' goal this offseason has been clear: run prevention, run prevention, run prevention. And certainly, they've made great strides towards that goal. Mike Cameron will hush fears of Jacoby Ellsbury's suspect reads, while Ellsbury will take advantage of the smaller left field, replacing the sieve that was Jason Bay. Adrian Beltre is one of the best defensive third basemen to play the game in recent years, and will hopefully allow Kevin Youkilis to supply his top-notch defense at first for the whole season. Marco Scutaro will provide some consistency at shortstop, for once, and all of this will be taking place behind a ridiculously strong rotation.

But in the eyes of many, this has been at the cost of offense. "We won't be able to hit elite pitching" (who can?) or "We're lacking a middle-of-the-rotation bat" are oft-heard complaints. Right now, let's take a look at what we actually have--all semantics aside. This article will attempt to look at the offensive production gained or lost objectively with statistics, so if you're not a fan of wOBA, now is the time to turn around. I've taken advantage of Beyond the Boxscore's wOBA to RAR calculator to turn wOBA over a certain number of plate appearances into the more tangible concept of runs for the sake of simplicity.

First, we need to establish a baseline. Let's use the 2009 Sox. Last year we scored 872 runs--the 3rd most of any team that season, and the 10th most in the last 5 seasons. If that's not a good offensive team, I don't know

what is.

So what's changed since 2009? Well, a fair amount. Let's look at new players since the start of the 2009 season, who they're replacing, and how much of a difference it's going to make.

The first change is the difference that a whole season of Victor Martinez will make over a season of Jason Varitek. In 2009, Jason Varitek caught 109 games, accumulating 425 plate appearances. Let's consider this to be the load of the "starting catcher" that Victor Martinez is taking over. Last year, Jason Varitek had a .306 wOBA, while Victor Martinez managed a .399 while with Boston. Now, I'm sure Fenway helped Victor out some, but it seems likely that he won't be able to maintain that number, and again, I'm trying to be conservative--even pessimistic! Let's aim closer to his recent averages at .370 instead. Then we have to subtract Martinez' .399 wOBA over 31 games started at catcher. With these fairly conservative calculations (which don't include any time Martinez would spend at other positions over the other 53 games of the season), the switch from Varitek to Martinez should be worth about 8.2 runs over last year.

Next up is the Marco Scutaro change. Last year's group of shortstops posted a truly atrocious .289 wOBA over 574 plate appearances, while Marco Scutaro managed a solid .354. However, it's the consensus opinion that Scutaro won't keep up his performance from last year, even if his plate discipline peripherals suggest it wasn't just a matter of luck. Bill James and the Fans projections both are right around .327, though, which doesn't seem at all unreasonable. Over the same 574 plate appearances, the difference between Scutaro and last year's shortstops is worth 19.5 runs.

From here, we enter negative territory with a positive balance of 27.7 runs.

At 3rd base, we have the newly acquired Adrian Beltre, whose offensive production is a matter of much debate, replacing Mike Lowell. Last year, Lowell managed a wOBA of .346 over 440 plate appearances at 3rd



base. Now, it's not fair to really only compare Lowell and Beltre, as Youkilis spent tons of time at 3rd with Victor Martinez filling in at first, making V-Mart the effective substitution. However, since we're not considering Martinez' time spent elsewhere this coming year, we can't really count it this year. It would be about the same as far as plate appearances are concerned. We'll also, for the sake of simplicity, not consider Casey Kotchman's fill-ins, since he'll likely be back too. Adrian Beltre, for his part, had a very bad year last year, but he was dealing with injuries. It's more fair to instead look at his 3 previous years, which were all very consistent around .340 wOBA. Again, to be considerate, we won't even consider the advantage of hitting in Fenway as compared to Safeco, great though it may be. Given the .006 wOBA difference, there's not much change in production switching from Lowell to Beltre--only 2.3 runs.

*'Last year, we scored a ton of runs. This year, we'll still score a ton of runs. The difference is that we won't give up nearly as many.'*

Finally, there's the big one: left field. While Ellsbury may well be the one manning the position come 2010, it's really Mike Cameron that's replacing Jason Bay, so we'll use him for comparison. Jason Bay was an undeniable offensive stud last year, managing a .397 wOBA over 638 plate appearances. It might be a bit optimistic to expect Cameron to manage that many plate appearances, but for once I'm going to be optimistic and assume he stays healthy all season (which he's mostly managed three of the last 4 seasons). In exchange, we'll ignore the fact that, given their likely different positions in the lineup, many of Bays at bats would be going to a better offensive producer like Drew. For Cameron, we'll put the wOBA level again at .340. This is less than Cameron has managed in recent years, for the most part, but let's accept some decline in production due to age, fitness buff that

Cameron might be. The difference here is admittedly dramatic, as the switch from Jason Bay will cost the Red Sox some 32.2 runs.

Some quick math later, and we have the figure of 6.8 runs. That's it. The Boston Red Sox of 2010 should, even assuming a fairly low baseline for all replacement players, score only 6.8 runs fewer than they did in 2010. Even ignoring all bumps longtime residents of Progressive, Miller, and Safeco Field might get from playing half their games in Fenway. Even assuming that Ortiz doesn't continue his performance from the last half, but replicates his mediocre season as a whole. Even assuming that our young guys like Pedroia and Ellsbury don't improve! It doesn't take into account the advantages that fans of "small ball" might have, as both Cameron and Beltre can steal a base if they need to compared to one in Jason Bay (to say nothing of all the cries of GDP-machine Lowell last year). The difference is all of 6.8 runs.

Last year, the Sox ended the season in a series where they failed to score more than 1 run combined in the first 2 games. And of course, there was the long period against the Yankees where they just couldn't score any runs. It was streaks like these that set off an alarm in Red Sox Nation making everyone think that we were somehow a bad team with a weak lineup. But alarmism is the perfect way to describe that. Every player slumps. Sometimes teams slump together--have a bad game or two. Even 3 like against the Yankees. Looking at a sample as small as 5 cherry-picked games, though, is an absolutely ridiculous way to assess a team's abilities, and the changes that need to be made. Last year, we scored a ton of runs. This year, we'll still score a ton of runs. The difference is that we won't give up nearly as many, and we'll have a better chance of winning any game we play as a result.

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# Pitches per Plate Appearance: The Forgotten Offensive Stat

*by wolf9309*

*Originally published Feb. 4, 2010*

Amid all the discussions of offense, one key stat that is very frequently forgotten is pitches per plate appearance. Why is this so important? Because the more pitches each batter can take, the faster we can get opposing starters out of the game and get to the (usually) weaker bullpens. The faster our lineup can get starters out of the game, the more pitchers we can make opposing teams go through, not only making it so we face the strong starters for less innings, but also helping to wear down the bullpen by the end of a 3 game series.

So obviously, seeing a lot of pitches is important to do, and it's a well known fact that the Red Sox are one of the main preachers of plate discipline out there, so let's see how exactly the 2010 Red Sox are going to stack up in this oft-forgotten stat.

After the jump, we'll look at how the starting 9 performed in this category in 2009 and see if we can pinpoint any particular trends.

Here are the specific PPA numbers for each of the 2010 starting members of the Red Sox:

*Jacoby Ellsbury: 3.77 (best)*

*Dustin Pedroia: 3.95 (best)*

*Victor Martinez: 4.05 (best)*

*Kevin Youkilis: 4.41 (improved from 2008, best was 4.42 in 2006)*

*J.D. Drew: 4.12 (best was 4.16 in 2008)*

*David Ortiz: 4.19 (best since joining the Red Sox)*

*Adrian Beltre: 3.56 (injured, career average 3.77)*

*Marco Scutaro: 4.06 (best)*

*Mike Cameron: 3.96*

Now, first of all, the average number of pitches per one time through the starting lineup is 36.07. That number is phenomenal and means that it should be very rare that any starter can make it through our full lineup 3 times or more in a game.

For my notes on the side, let me explain- the ones who say (best) next to their name (please note that this is 4 out of the 9 players) had more pitches per plate appearance in 2009 than any previous career year. These are players who have been trending upwards- there are no numbers that look like extreme outliers here, just like improved plate discipline. From these players, I expect to see them all either progress in 2010 or stay around where they are.

Of the other players, none of them have been trending downwards- even Ortiz, in his terrible year, saw more pitches per plate appearance than he has since joining the Sox. Youkilis had his best year since 2006, when he was essentially at the same number as 2009. Cameron had a down year, but has not shown himself to be trending downwards apart from that year- in 2008 he had an outlier very good year, seeing 4.21 pitches per plate appearance. Beltre was terrible, seeing a mere 3.56, however, it's a given that during his injury year, most of his stats are lower than usual. His career average is 3.77, and his numbers outside of 2009 are generally closer to there.

One very positive thing to note, is that while Martinez posted a very respectable 4.04 for the year, he actually saw 4.28 per plate appearance since joining the stronger Red Sox lineup- while we can probably expect that number to fall a bit, we should expect to see great things from him on the Sox in 2010.

Overall, the numbers to me appear to be trending upwards, and I expect to see them improve further in 2010; this Red Sox lineup could well be the most patient lineup in the majors- if not, it's certainly amongst them.

But then, we are replacing players such as Bay, who was known to walk quite a bit, so is this actual improvement over the 2009 team?

The answer is a simple, unequivocal yes.

The players who are being replaced and their numbers for 2009 were:

*Jason Bay: 3.99 (replaced by Cameron, 3.96)*

*Nick Green 3.44 (replaced by Scutaro, 4.06)*

*Mike Lowell: 3.67 (replaced by Beltre 3.56, career 3.77)*

*Jason Varitek: 3.80 (replaced by Martinez, 4.04)*

*Overall for 2009:*

*League Average PPA: 3.84*

*2009 Red Sox PPA: 3.94*

This lineup in 2009 would have seen: 4.01

As we can see, the Red Sox downgraded a little in two areas, both of which appeared to be low outlier years for the players replacing them (Beltre and Cameron). In reality, looking at career trends, I expect Cameron and Beltre to see almost exactly the same amount of PPA in 2010 as did Bay and Lowell, respectively, in 2009. In addition to this, Martinez and Scutaro are massive improvements over Varitek and Green (who I chose because he saw the most PAs for the Sox at short, I know Alex Gonzalez posted almost the same exact PPA numbers during his time with the Sox).

While some people may argue that the offense is weakened from 2009, I would argue back that there are more subtle stats than OPS and HR that can make a huge difference over the long haul of the season. Facing more tired pitchers, and more weaker pitchers in general, should actually help boost the other offensive stats of the team. This is a subtle difference that should add up to something pretty significant over the course of a season.

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