

Red Sox seek strong finish before All-Star break

SPORTSDIRECT

The last time the Boston Red Sox faced division rival Tampa Bay, they dropped two of three to complete a difficult road trip that had many wondering if manager John Farrell's job was safe. The Red Sox have rebounded with consecutive series wins and are feeling a bit better about themselves entering a three-game set with the visiting Rays beginning at 7:10 p.m. Friday.

RED SOX NOTEBOOK

"We've played much better baseball with the exception of the one game here this month," Farrell told reporters after Wednesday's win, referencing a 21-2 loss to the Los Angeles Angels that stands out amid an otherwise successful homestand. "It's good to get a couple series wins back-to-back."

David Ortiz homered in Wednesday night's 11-6 victory over Texas as Boston won for the third time in four games — all while scoring at least 10 runs. They were held to five hits — all singles — in a 4-0 defeat at Tampa Bay on June 29 before returning home to seemingly right the ship. That was one of just three victories in a span of 22 games for the Rays, who fell 5-1 to the Angels on Thursday.

The series opener will match up Rays righthander Chris Archer (4-11, 4.50 ERA) against Boston righty Sean O'Sullivan (2-0, 6.61).

Archer showed signs of a poten-

tial turnaround with 5 2/3 scoreless innings and 10 strikeouts against Detroit on Sunday, although it was his shortest start since May 22. He gave up four runs while fanning nine in 6 1/3 innings of a loss to Boston the previous turn and was rocked for six runs in 4 1/3 frames at Fenway Park earlier in the year. Ortiz is 12-for-31 with two homers against Archer while shortstop Xander Bogaerts has gone 6-for-16 versus the 27-year-old.

O'Sullivan is the latest candidate attempting to shore up the shaky back end of Boston's rotation and he earned himself at least one more start with five solid innings in a win over Los Angeles on Sunday. The San Diego native allowed two runs and four hits in that one and is now 5-0 with a 2.54 ERA in his last six outings, the last five of which came for Triple-A Pawtucket. O'Sullivan has allowed six runs in 10 2/3 innings over two career starts against the Rays.

The Red Sox play three games against the Rays before the All-Star break and will return to action at 7:05 p.m. Friday, July 15 against the Yankees in New York.

NOTES: Red Sox third baseman Travis Shaw (bruised foot) is day-to-day. ... Rays shortstop Brad Miller has four home runs in his last 10 games. ... Boston catcher Sandy Leon is 21-for-44 with five walks in 16 games since being called up from Pawtucket.



Boston Red Sox right fielder Mookie Betts (right) celebrates with manager John Farrell after defeating the Los Angeles Angels at Fenway Park on Sunday.

BOB DECHIARA | USA TODAY

Sox routine lacks Louis CK-like comedic value

BY MICHAEL SILVERMAN
BOSTON HERALD

BOSTON — It somehow felt fitting that the pride of Newton, comedian Louis C.K., took in the

COMMENTARY first half of last night's 11-6 Red Sox victory at Fenway Park against the Texas Rangers.

Not that the game was a pure laugh — it wasn't. And not that the Sox are a laughing matter this season — they're not.

When Craig Kimbrel asks to come back out to the mound the night after leaving a nasty stench in a foul loss and manages to protect a five-run lead with a scoreless frame that still included two walks, then you have a sense of the almost comical mood swings the Red Sox are putting us all through these days, and this season.

The comedian, on his feet and applauding frequently from owner John Henry's seats as the Sox ran out to an

early 10-run lead, was already on stage in Somerville, Mass., by the time Kimbrel was putting out his fire, an heroic act that likely kept manager John Farrell out of the line of fire from some itchy-trigger types for a couple more minutes.

No doubt if there's a joke to be made about the 2016 Red Sox, Louis C.K. would discover it long before I ever could. The comedian relishes expounding on the absurdities and foibles of everyday life, twisting our shared mundane encounters into consistently hilarious and brutally honest, cathartic riffs.

Each Red Sox season offers overflowing bushels of material to make comedy hay out of, but all I'm pointing out is that this one lands right in Louis' wheelhouse, even though it wobbles perilously close into blistering, caustic and profane comedy-house circuit material far too often.

One night it's the deeply unfunny David Price allow-

ing a home run on the first pitch, then settling in for a pretty solid seven more innings, only to have Kimbrel come out and slip on his banana peel. Then there's a night like last night, when Steven Wright pitches a clean first inning for once, the Sox race out to an 11-1 lead and the Rangers start to tighten the collar with five unanswered runs.

The Red Sox continue to show all the fatal flaws of a team that appears to be headed nowhere. The rotation is waifishly thin, the bullpen is overextended and erratic, and the lineup is dangerous but has a bad habit of winning blowouts and falling short in tight games.

That said, the Red Sox also have a 46-38 record that leaves them with the second-best non-first place record in the American League. And they just won a series against the best team in the league, the Rangers, after

they won another series against one of the worst teams in the league, the Los Angeles Angels.

For a team with weaknesses, it has its strengths, too.

That's hardly the definition of a powerhouse but they're not a punching bag, either. The Red Sox can be easy to make fun of sometimes and to date they stubbornly refuse, mainly because of the pitching, to allow us to get too crazy about them.

With some new talent, provided by a savvy front office and overseen by a thoughtful coaching staff, this team should be capable of playing better baseball more often.

"I know our pitching is going to get better," said David Ortiz, who hit a two-run homer in the first inning last night. "I'm 100 percent sure that our pitching is going to get better for the second half of the season. We have great talent. It's all

about making less mistakes and I think (Price's) outing (Tuesday) night was unbelievable. He got in trouble the first inning but after that, he kind of shut it down."

Farrell's job security, obsessed over by some, is not really the issue at the moment.

"Particularly when you get your starters into the seventh inning, that certainly goes a long way," Farrell said. "We've been able to do that the last couple of nights. We've played much better baseball with the exception of the one game here this month (the 21-2 loss to the Angels). It's good to get a couple of series wins back to back."

The 2016 Red Sox are in a funny spot these days.

We're really just midway through a routine that feels like it could bomb at any time or still has time to recover and get on a roll that will leave them laughing in the aisles.

Harvey to DL, could miss season

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

New York starting pitcher Matt Harvey is headed to the disabled list and is likely facing season-ending shoulder surgery.

General manager Sandy Alderson told reporters on Thursday that Harvey has two options — surgery or a nerve-blocking injection — in regards to thoracic outlet syndrome in his right shoulder.

Alderson said surgery would sideline Harvey for at least four months, which would make it a season-ending procedure.

Alderson said Harvey will need surgery eventually.

Harvey, 4-10 this season with a 4.60 ERA, officially was listed as having shoulder discomfort. Ten losses represent a career-high for Harvey.

Harvey, 27, was considered for a demotion earlier this season when he struggled to winless start.

Seth Lugo, a right-handed pitcher, was recalled from Las Vegas and Logan Verrett could start when Harvey's turn in the rotation comes up Saturday against the Washington Nationals. Harvey allowed 11 hits in his last start.

The Mets have worrisome health matters with two other starting pitchers in their stellar rotation. Steven Matz and Noah Syndergaard experiencing bone spurs. Matz pitched well in a loss to the Marlins on Tuesday and is attempting to pitch through mild discomfort. Syndergaard, who could start the All-Star Game, left his June 27 start early but was dominant last week against the Chicago Cubs.

Cards' Carpenter out of All-Star Game

The St. Louis Cardinals have placed second baseman Matt Carpenter on the disabled list with a right oblique strain, and purchased the contract of catcher Michael McKenry from Triple-A Memphis.

Shortstop Aledmys Diaz was added to the National League All-Star roster in Carpenter's place.

Carpenter missed about a month with a similar injury four years ago and while coach Mike Matheny didn't offer an immediate timeline for Carpenter's return, he acknowledged it can be a difficult injury to overcome.

"I've felt that injury. I've seen it. It can be tough," Matheny said after Wednesday's game against Pittsburgh.

Carpenter, who clubbed his side after a check-swing in the third inning, entered the game leading the National League in on-base percentage (.421) and OPS (.991).

Maine athlete fails to advance at Olympic Trials

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

EUGENE, Oregon — Becky O'Brien of Cumberland finished 16th in the qualifying round of the shot put Thursday during the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials and did not advance to the final round later that evening at Hayward Field.

The 25-year-old O'Brien, a third-year assistant track coach at the University of Southern Maine in Gorham, recorded distances of 55 feet, 11 3/4 inches in her first and second throws and a 54 1/2 inches in her final attempt.

O'Brien was a scholastic national champion in the shot put with a throw of 52

feet, 1 inch while a student at Greely High School in Cumberland Center.

She is a 2012 graduate of the University of Buffalo, where she set school and Mid-American Conference records for the shot put both indoors (57-7) and outdoors (56-6), and the discus (193-7).

Tia Brooks, a two-time NCAA champion from the University of Oklahoma, turned in the best qualifying effort with a distance of 62-6 1/2.

On Wednesday night, Amber Campbell defended her title and broke her own meet record in the women's hammer throw at the Trials.

Campbell bettered her Trials record of 235-6 set when she won the event in 2012.

"Have fun and let it rip

and see what happens," Campbell said. "In 2012 I got the win and the record and it happened again, so I am very excited."

Campbell was third heading into the final round before passing Gwen Berry and DeAnna Price on her final attempt to earn a trip back to the Olympics in Rio.

"I was just trying to relax and let it fly," Campbell said. "It was all about getting that last one to go and it did, so I am happy with it."

Price led at 239-9 heading into the sixth and final round, but was passed by Campbell and tied by Berry, who earned second place based on her second-best throw of 236-5. Berry set the American record at 250-4 in

May, but the mark was wiped out because she reported that she had used a medication to treat asthma that wasn't on the approved list.

"I took it personal and went as crazy as I could," said Berry, who joined Campbell and Price as Olympic qualifiers. "I felt like a lot of things were taken from me this season. I got in trouble for something small. I wanted to make the team and prove to the world that I am here because of my talents and not an inhaler or cheating or drugs and that is what I did."

Campbell just finished her collegiate season at Southern Illinois before making the Olympic team with the toss on her fifth at-

tempt.

"I was thinking 'I got this' and then I hit the finish and knew it," she said. "I knew it was a good one and then when it came up, it was a dream come true."

All three Olympic qualifiers bettered the meet record set by Campbell in 2012.

Amanda Bingson, who won the national title in 2013 and 2014, placed fourth at 230-8.

"It's not exactly what I wanted, but we have got some good girls going over to Rio that are going to do some damage," Bingson said. "This is probably as competitive as it has been. They broke the meet record a couple times. That is why they call it the hardest team to make."

Colford propels Comrades past RH Foster for 10-2 win

BANGOR — The Coffee News Comrades of Bangor received a complete-game performance from Jesse Colford in American

SUMMER BASEBALL

League action en route to a 10-2 victory over R.H. Foster of Hampden Thursday night at Mansfield Stadium.

Colford struck out eight and gave up two runs on eight hits in a 104-pitch performance.

For Coffee News, Ryan Brookings doubled, singled and drove in three runs. Tyler Parke had two singles and two RBIs while Peter Kemble and Sam Huston each singled twice. Andrew Hillier and Colford added RBI singles and Derek Fournier had an RBI.

For R.H. Foster, Jackson

Gilmore singled twice and scored a run while Zach Nash added a RBI single. Casey Sudbeck, Emery Dinsmore, Brandon Smith and Alex Applebee each singled.

R.H. Foster 200 000 0 — 2 8 3

Coffee News 502 021 0 — 10 11 1

Sudbeck, Smith (3), Applebee (5) and Thomas; Colford and Fournier

Post 51 13, Coffee News 7

At Colby College on Wednesday night, Post 51 scored 12 runs over the last three innings and came from six runs down to post a victory over Coffee News of Bangor.

Dan Pooler had a single, double, triple and four RBIs, and John Wilkie singled three times, doubled and

drove in three runs to lead Post 51 of Oakland. James Lathrop pitched five innings of one-run relief to earn the win on the mound.

Peter Kemble pitched the first five innings for Coffee News allowing one run while striking out 10. At the plate, Sam Huston singled three times and drove in a run, while Kyle Stevenson doubled, singled and had an RBI. Ben Crichton and Ryan Brookings each tripled.

Post 51 000 012 640 — 13 16 1

Coffee News 302 100 001 — 7 13 2

Kemble, Pierce (6), Crichton (8), Canaar and Fournier; Brown, Lathrop (5) and Gettig

D3 Baseball, 9-10

Brewer 10, Houlton 0

At Brewer, the Brewer all-

stars scored four runs in the first inning and five more in the second en route to the District 3 tourney win over Houlton.

Dominik Stecher singled twice, drove in a run and scored two to spark Brewer. Grady Vanidestine chipped in with a triple and two runs while Jack Mason added a single and two RBIs to back up winning pitcher Silas Keefe.

Garrett Fitzpatrick singled for Houlton.

Houlton 000 0 — 0

Brewer 450 1 — 10

Hanning and Lynds; Keefe and Hanning

D1 Baseball, 11-12

Machias 22, Bucksport 1

At Bee Field in Machias on Wednesday, Jack Emery hit a grand slam and two

singles to help Machias beat Bucksport in the District 1 all-star tourney game.

Machias is now 1-1 and Bucksport is 1-2 and has been eliminated.

Kashman Feeney and Caleb Campbell each chipped in with a double and single for Machias. Jayden Rhodes contributed with three hits while Drew Abelon and Gaven Bixler each had two and Ethan Hicks had one. Ethan Foss added a double.

Tyler Hallett hit a solo home run for Bucksport in the third inning.

Bucksport 102 0 — 1 3 2

Machias (12) 64 0 — 22 16 1

Rich, Hallett (1) and Hanscomb, Rich; Rhodes, Campbell (3), Feeney (4); Emery and Rhodes (3)