

Machi to take over Red Sox closer role

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

NEW YORK — Jean Machi collected 90 saves in 11 minor league seasons. Now the right-hander is going to get the chance to prove to the Boston Red Sox that he can close in the majors, too.

RED SOX NOTEBOOK

Red Sox interim manager Torey Lovullo said Sunday afternoon, prior to a 5-4 loss to the New York Mets at Citi Field, that Machi will take over ninth-inning duties. Right-hander Junichi Tazawa,

who was serving as closer but had to be yanked from a save situation after walking four batters in the 10th inning of a 6-4 win on Friday, will return to the eighth-inning role he occupied before taking the spot of injured right-hander Koji Uehara, who suffered a broken wrist Aug. 7.

Tazawa — who tweaked his right hip and right groin while turning to start a double play Friday but was available if needed Sunday — has entered a game in the eighth inning 25 times in 56 appearances this season. He has also recorded more than three outs 10 times.

“Obviously (he) was locking down the eighth inning,” Lovullo said. “What I expressed to him is we have a number of other guys that are stepping up right now and what I want to do is give you the ball in the right situation if we’re ahead or tied.”

Machi has five saves as a big leaguer and three this season, though he allowed a total of three runs in his first two chances for the Red Sox before he threw a perfect ninth inning to close out Saturday’s 3-1 win.

But despite his lack of big-

league track record and bloated ERA this season — Machi has a 5.21 mark between the San Francisco Giants and the Red Sox, who claimed him off waivers on July 28 — Lovullo is confident Machi’s playoff experience will allow him to thrive in the ninth inning. Machi appeared in seven postseason games for the World Series-winning Giants last year, though he posted a 7.94 ERA.

“He’s pitched in big games — nothing bigger than World Series games for me,” Lovullo said. “So he’s battle-tested.”

NOTES: Boston designated hitter David Ortiz moved into sole possession of 27th place on baseball’s all-time home run list Sunday, when he hit a two-run shot in the sixth inning of a 5-4 loss to the Mets. The home run was the 494th of Ortiz’s career and broke a tie with Lou Gehrig and Fred McGriff. Next up on the list is Eddie Murray, who hit 504 homers. Ortiz went 4-for-8 with two homers and three RBI during the weekend series and is now hitting .264 while leading the Red Sox with 28 homers and 79 RBIs.

Football

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language, that his team cannot afford to dwell on that.

The most salient point of all might have come from that almost preternaturally muted coach at Michigan State, Mark Dantonio. Having gone 24-3 with two major bowl wins the last two seasons, he said, “Things hang by the inches. When people get hot, great things can happen. Good football team, good players, well-coached, a lot of confidence, got hot. You know the rest.”

The rest: Ohio State, in a sport where the Southeastern Conference had won seven of the previous eight national titles and finished as runner-up in the other, breathtakingly overcame the loss of two starting quarterbacks, won the first College Football Playoff, scored 143 points in three postseason games and dragged the whole sport north.

That seemed far-fetched even on Dec. 1, 2014. It’s hard to remember now, but the Big Ten remained only mildly relevant up to then. It hadn’t reached a national championship game in seven years. In non-conference games against the 65-team top tier in 2014, it stood 5-12. Against ranked non-conference teams, it stood 2-5, with the wins by a couple of stragglers over a couple of No. 18s: by Indiana in September at Missouri, and by Northwestern in November at Notre Dame.

Its defending champion and Rose Bowl champion, Michigan State, had taken a 49-37 pounding at home to underdog Ohio State. Its new frontrunner, Ohio State, had rebounded beautifully from a loss to Virginia



Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer answers questions during 2015 Big Ten Football Media Days at Hyatt Regency McCormick Place in Chicago in July.

Tech on Sept. 6, but had just lost surging quarterback J.T. Barrett to a fractured ankle on Nov. 29. Ohio State may have needed a smashing victory in the Big Ten Championship Game on Dec. 6 — and it came by 59-0 — just to nudge from No. 6 to No. 4 and into the first four-team playoff.

Nobody sat around forecasting that nine months thence, the buzz could reside in Columbus and thereabout. Then, on Dec. 30, Michigan, a vaguely relevant 46-42 across seven seasons, loudly hired Jim Harbaugh to return to the town of his quarterbacking as coach, one who had been to three NFC Championship Games with the San Francisco 49ers. Then, on Jan. 1, to hear Meyer tell it, there came two little turns — one in a trivial bowl game, the other in a less-trivial bowl game.

“I’ll tell you when I think the tide turned a little bit,” he said later that night, “was

when Wisconsin beat Auburn (in the Outback Bowl). Everybody on our team knew that. I made sure they knew that. Then Michigan State came back (from a 41-21 deficit) and beat an excellent Baylor team (in the Cotton Bowl). And maybe the Big Ten’s not that bad. Maybe the Big Ten is pretty damned good. And it’s certainly getting better. Because the mind is a fragile thing.

“So there’s no doubt when we saw Wisconsin beat Auburn (34-31 in overtime), that was a major moment for us getting ready for this game.” Of his players, he said, “You should have seen their faces, man. They knew. They knew.”

They knew enough that not even a 21-6 deficit could discourage them later that night against No. 1 Alabama. By halftime, they trailed only 21-20. With two minutes to go, they led 42-28 before winning 42-35, all

with third-string Cardale Jones as (excellent) quarterback.

“It’s probably the best game I’ve seen Ohio State play in the last 18-20 years I’ve been doing this,” Lachey said. “Against that champion — three of the previous five seasons — ‘and in that atmosphere’ — in the Southeast — ‘and against a team from the SEC.’ He mentioned the adage that one must beat the champion to become the champion. ‘That night,’ he said. ‘About as good as I’ve seen it.’”

Eleven nights later in Texas, after the first title game in nine years without an SEC team in it, the epicenter had moved, the idea of Meyer had gone further north, and inches had turned to northbound miles.

This year’s curiosity (Michigan) opens Thursday at Utah, and this year’s monster opens next Monday at Virginia Tech.

Celtics, Red Claws extend affiliation

PORTLAND — The Maine Red Claws and the Boston Celtics have completed a contract extension that will keep the Red Claws as Boston’s only NBA Development League affiliate through the 2017-18 season.

“We couldn’t be more excited to continue our relationship with Bill Ryan and the Red Claws,” Celtics President of Basketball Operations Danny Ainge said in a press release.

“Maine is full of die-hard Celtics fans, and we hear all the time from both NBA and D-League players that the environment at the Portland Expo is the best in the D-League. There simply is no better place than Maine for our young players to gain valuable experience against top-level competition, and we expect several of them will take advantage of this opportunity again this year and in the years to come.”

The Celtics have been an affiliate of the Red Claws since Maine’s inaugural 2009-2010 season. In 2012, the Celtics and Red Claws entered a “hybrid” affiliation — the Celtics became the Red Claws’ lone NBA affiliate, and assumed control of the basket-

ball operations of the team.

“We are thrilled to extend our relationship with the Celtics,” said Red Claws chairman Bill Ryan. “Since they have taken control of our basketball operations, we have made the playoffs in two out of three years. We have created a great partnership and look forward to that continuing with the Celtics into the future.”

The Red Claws (35-15) enjoyed their best season ever in 2014-15, thanks in large part to the Celtics. Boston assigned a franchise record six players to Maine over the course of the season, including first-round 2014 NBA Draft selections Marcus Smart and James Young. Since 2009, 15 Celtics players have suited up for the Red Claws. Tim Frazier, assigned to Maine out of Celtics training camp, went on to win NBA D-League MVP and Rookie of the Year honors. Scott Morrison, hired to coach the team by the Celtics Basketball Operations staff, was named 2014-15 NBA D-League Coach of the Year.

The Red Claws will begin their seventh season this November. The 2015-16 schedule will be announced in the coming weeks.

Fan’s death from fall at Atlanta game probed

BY DAVID BEASLEY
REUTERS

ATLANTA — A 60-year-old man who plummeted to his death from the upper deck of the Atlanta Braves’ baseball stadium on Saturday died of blunt force trauma, a medical investigator said Monday, but the cause of his fall has not been determined.

Gregory Murrey fell head-first about 40 feet during a sell-out game between the Atlanta Braves and the New York Yankees.

The Georgia man’s death remains under investiga-

tion, and it could take six to eight weeks for a toxicology report to be completed, said Mark Ruffin, an investigator with the Fulton County Medical Examiner’s office.

Murrey was the third fan to fall to his death at the Braves stadium, Turner Field, since 2008, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported. One of those deaths was later ruled a suicide, the newspaper said.

Murrey seemed to lose his balance as the crowd jumped up to boo Yankees’ slugger Alex Rodriguez, who was walking up to bat, a witness told the Journal-Constitu-

tion. Rodriguez has been controversial since his suspension for the 2014 season as part of baseball’s doping scandal.

No foul play is suspected, but the cause of Murrey’s fall had not been determined, Atlanta police spokesman Greg Lyon said.

Murrey was a Braves season ticket holder for 23 years, his family said in a statement to the media on Sunday. “The night Greg passed away, he was doing one of his favorite things — watching the Braves,” it said.

The Braves observed a moment of silence for Murrey

before Sunday afternoon’s game.

Stadium safety has become an issue for Major League Baseball, which is reviewing design concepts after several people have been hurt by foul balls and flying bats.

The league is considering adding more protective netting to its ballparks next season, baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said last week. However, he did not speak directly about fans falling from the seating areas.

Turner Field is due to be demolished after the team leaves in 2016 for a new venue.

Arrieta dons pajamas after throwing no-hitter

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

LOS ANGELES — Without a doubt, Chicago Cubs right-hander Jake Arrieta is the first pitcher in baseball history to throw a no-hitter and then show up for his postgame press conference in “onesie” pajamas.

The pajamas were mandatory travel attire for the Cubs’ flight home from California after a six-game road trip to San Francisco and Los Angeles. The Cubs won the first game of the trip but lost the next four before going home happy after Arrieta’s no-hitter Sunday night in a 2-0 win over the Los Angeles Dodgers.

“It works both ways,” Maddon said. “If you won, it makes it better. And if you

lost, it’s, ‘Let’s put this behind us and move on.’ I see it as a ‘Win-Win-Win’ as Michael Scott (Steve Carell’s character on ‘The Office’) would say.”

Arrieta’s fashion choice was a moustache-embellished onesie. Second baseman Starlin Castro went with a Super Mario Brothers ensemble.

Superhero-themed pajamas were popular, with closer Hector Rondon sporting a Superman onesie and reliever Pedro Strop going for a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles outfit.

Maddon has made the “themed” road trips a staple of his managerial style from the start of his time with the Tampa Bay Rays. The team-bonding exercise breaks up

the monotony of baseball’s travel schedule and promotes team unity.

Earlier this season — Maddon’s first with the Cubs — he declared a “Blackhawks” road trip in honor of Chicago’s Stanley Cup victory. Players were encouraged to wear Blackhawks jerseys or other gear.

On another trip, the attire was limited to sports coats with chinos — or shorts.

The pajama party wasn’t quite timed properly, Maddon admitted, with South-

ern California experiencing a heat wave.

“I really thought that by this time of the year here, it was going to be cooler at night and they would play perfectly,” he said. “Bad call.”

Pajama night came after Arrieta put the Dodgers to sleep in a 12-strikeout performance. He issued one walk and had one batter reach base on an error.

“Everybody who plays this game wants to accomplish great things,” the right-hander said. “You think about that all the time as a kid. You see other people do it, and you want to be a part of something like that. It’s hard to put that into words right now.”



Arrieta

Old Town

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four years later. His teams also won 12 Eastern Maine titles.

Ploch, the school’s swimming and diving coach for boys teams for 21 seasons and for girls seven seasons, guided Old Town to 13 straight state championships, a Class B record. He was named the state’s swim

coach of the year eight times.

Inductees will be introduced at a pregame reception before the homecoming football game against Foxcroft Academy. A public reception will begin at 4 p.m.

in MacKenzie Gymnasium and include the induction ceremony, video tribute and light refreshments. The class of 2015 also will be recognized at halftime where they will receive their Hall of Fame plaques.



ADREES LATIF | REUTERS

Novak Djokovic of Serbia hits a return to Joao Souza of Brazil during their match at the U.S. Open Championships in New York on Monday. Djokovic won 6-1, 6-1, 6-1.

Tennis

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“I couldn’t ask for a better opening of this year’s U.S. Open. Hopefully I can continue in that rhythm.”

Despite going 56-5 this year, Djokovic said a victory like Monday’s can give the nine-times grand slam singles winner a boost.

“With a dominant win like the one today, it adds to your confidence, your self-belief,” he said. “It’s also making a statement for everybody that is out there watching. We are all seeing how each other progresses.”

“It’s important you’re out on the court with the right intensity and you’re sending a good message, and I’ve done so.”

Djokovic will next meet either Canadian Vasek Pospisil or Andreas Haider-Maurer of Austria.

In other matches, Kei Nishikori was back in the U.S. Open spotlight but for all the wrong reasons as last year’s runner-up headlined a day of first-round upsets.

Fourth seed Nishikori, who last year became the

first Asian man to reach a grand slam final, found defeat hard to swallow after squandering two match points in the 6-4, 3-6, 4-6, 7-6(6), 6-4 loss to Frenchman Benoît Paire.

The 25-year-old Japanese had plenty of company at the exit following a string of opening-day upsets that included Serbian seventh seed and former world number one Ana Ivanovic, eighth seeded Czech Karolina Pliskova and 10th-seed Carla Suarez Navarro of Spain.

A hot, muggy day that attracted a record first session crowd of over 37,000 got off to an ominous start when 50th-ranked Slovakian Dominika Cibulkova dispatched Ivanovic 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 on the Arthur Ashe Stadium court.

Anna Tatishvili gave the home fans a reason to get excited as the 121st-ranked American qualifier destroyed Pliskova 6-2, 6-1 while Frenchwoman Oceane Dodin kept the upsets trending with 2-6, 7-5, 6-3 victory over Jelena Jankovic, the 21st seed and 2008 U.S. Open runner-up.

Easton soccer teams shut out Van Buren

VAN BUREN — Drew Sotomayor scored two goals to pace the Easton Bears to a 3-0 high school boys soccer victory over the Van Buren Crusaders Monday night.

Isaac Currier added a goal while Trevor Hathaway and Keegan Kinney each had an assist for the Bears.

Easton improved to 3-2 while Van Buren dipped to 0-4.

Girls Soccer

Easton 3, Van Buren 0

At Van Buren, Easton notched the win with Emma Bonner and Izzy Morin each scoring a goal.

Easton posted its first win and is now 1-4 while Van Buren slipped to 0-4.

HIGH SCHOOL ROUNDUP