

A close-up, profile view of Boston Red Sox manager Alex Cora. He is wearing a navy blue baseball cap with the Red Sox logo and a red hoodie. He is looking upwards and to the right with a slight smile.

**BOSTON
RED SOX
2021
PREVIEW
SECTION**

Sox manager has
a different, more
difficult task
ahead of him

CORA 2.0

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Tab to Broadsheet RED SOX



PAUL BILODEAU/Staff photo

Boston Red Sox manager Alex Cora talks to the media before Game 1 of the 2018 World Series at Fenway Park. Cora's role as manager that year will be very different than the job facing him this season.

Cora has to make big strides rehabbing image and team

Bill Burt

Alex Cora had better be better. As he begins his second act at Fenway Park, Cora inherits a Red Sox team that couldn't be more different than the lineup in 2018, when all the pieces were there and Cora only had to make, it seemed, easy decisions.

Five players in 2018 were All-Stars (Mookie Betts, Mitch Moreland, J.D. Martinez, Chris Sale and Craig Kimbrel); three finished in the top 13 for American League MVP (Betts, first; Martinez, fourth; Xander Bogaerts, 13th); and the Sox pitching staff included four high-end starters (Sale, Price, Rick Porcello and Eduardo

Rodriguez).

The 2018 Red Sox never lost more than three straight games. Three of the four times they lost that many, in late August and late September, their cushion was so big, it didn't much matter.

In 2018, Cora was the perfect manager for a veteran squad. He had a likable personality. He let the guys play.

This season, on the other hand, Cora has some heavy lifting to do — heavy, as in, he'd better get a fork lift.

We're not talking about cleaning up the collateral damage from the Astros cheating scandal in 2017 that, as Houston's bench coach, Cora figured in prominently. He served his one-year suspension. The Red Sox

rehired him as manager of the team going forward.

The task in front of Cora is about managing a very different Sox team than the one he managed in 2018, one that has enough question marks to fill an SAT exam.

Cora's entire 2018 and 2019 outfield — Betts, Andrew Benintendi and Jackie Bradley — has

“It’s fun to be around the guys, start thinking about what happened. Where I was, you think of family, people around me supporting the process. I was out of the game for the wrong reasons, but moving forward, I’m not going to hide it.”

Alex Cora

been dismantled. Betts wanted too much money. Benintendi couldn’t be counted on as a star. And Bradley’s glove, in the end, wasn’t worth \$15 million per year.

Cora’s pitching staff is fragile. Sale will offer little amid a long rehab from Tommy John surgery, and the Sox probably have just one guy, Eduardo Rodriguez, who can be counted on.

There’s one MVP candidate in Rafael Devers, but even he’s not a sure thing after a disappointing, injury-plagued run last summer.

The Sox overall are OK. With a few key additions or surprising seasons, they could hang around to chase a Wild Card. Which brings us back to the new and old manager.

There were reasons to want to Red Sox to look elsewhere in their search for a skipper.

For starters, Cora’s 2019 was

as bad as the run to the 2018 World Series trophy was special.

Cora’s arrogance in treating his second season as manager as Part II of the first was a huge mistake, and so un-Belichickian.

The Red Sox weren’t ready for 2019; see a 6-13 start versus 17-2 in 2018. And the luck, most of which had been good the year before, was all bad.

But even Bill Belichick has been there. Before Belichick was Belichick, he spent four years as head coach of the Cleveland Browns.

He did too much and didn’t have public relations on his side. He got better.

As for Cora’s 2019 arrogance, if indeed it permeated the locker room, it won’t in 2021.

He’s had a year to think about it.

“It’s fun to be around the guys, start thinking about what happened,” Cora said on his return.

“Where I was, you think of family, people around me supporting the process. I was out of the game for the wrong reasons, but moving forward, I’m not going to hide it.”

That was great to hear. We can expect Cora to be better.

Really, he has no choice.

A second act might take some time, which isn’t going to be so easily accepted in New England after back-to-back disappointments at Fenway Park.

Red Sox fans aren’t into long-term rebuilds, especially with ticket prices among the highest in Major League Baseball. (The Red Sox average ticket price in 2019 was a hefty \$59.32)

The good news is that the decision to rehire Cora wasn’t an emotional choice, at least not entirely.

Chaim Bloom, the Red Sox president of baseball operations, is said to have participated in

the decision. That’s important because in 15 years in Tampa Bay, Bloom proved himself to be extraordinary and a numbers guy.

Simply put, he’s into pitching and percentages, both of which were elite on his watch as vice president with the Rays.

So, the Red Sox successes going forward will have less to do about Cora’s pleasant personality and more about execution and timely placement of talent, even if developing that talent takes time.

Cora won’t succeed alone. He’ll need to inspire a few players, like Devers and Alex Verdugo, to upgrade their roles from young talent to team leaders.

Cora’s job description as manager of the Boston Red Sox is different now. This isn’t solely about winning. It’s about building a winner.

The gig will be tougher than

it was in Act One. Cora made a splash in 2018, as every move seemed to work out. This one could take maybe two years.

We’ll find out soon about Cora’s team-building abilities.

He’s not ready yet to assess his own talents. He’s still soaking it all in.

“It’s been fun to drive here to JetBlue Park,” Cora said from Fort Myers. “It’s fun to tell the family I’m working. It’s fun to be around the players. It’s fun to with the Boston Red Sox. It’s fun to be back in baseball.

“I’ve been around this game since I was 4 years old,” he said. “Though I watched from afar (last year), it wasn’t the same feeling. I so grateful to Red Sox ownership and (Chaim Bloom) for this opportunity.”

Let the games and Cora 2.0 begin.

You can email Bill Burt at bburt@eagletribune.com.



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Rebound: Pressure is on J.D. Martinez in 2021

BY BILL BURT

The future of the 2021 Boston Red Sox rests on the bat of a guy who hit .213 last summer.

If J.D. Martinez is not close to consistent this year, the 2021 Sox won't be challenging for anything.

The Red Sox lineup never found its stride in the COVID-19-shortened season of 2020, and Martinez represented the team's fall from World Series heights two years earlier as much as anyone.

After 60 games, he put up a disastrous .680 OPS (on base plus slugging percentage), the worst since his struggling years with the Astros, which eventually led to his release in 2013.

Martinez has heard the rumblings, with most baseball gurus expecting the Red Sox to be facing an average season in 2021.

He disagrees. He is confident in himself — and his team.

"We're going to surprise some people," he said.

So long ago

In 2018, the Red Sox played what was arguably the team's greatest season ever.

That year's Sox broke a franchise record with regular season wins (108); mowed through the postseason against powerhouses (Yankees, Astros and Dodgers) winning 11 of 14 games; and packed five All-Stars into the line-up as well as the American League MVP (Mookie Betts).

It all seems like a decade ago, doesn't it?

The Killer Bs in the outfield have been completely replaced, and the pitching staff sounds more like a lineup for the Pirates in a rebuilding year, with several names fans will need to Google.

But there are also some names from 2018 we remember well — Martinez (\$20 million), Rafael Devers (\$5.75 million), Nathan Eovaldi (\$17 million) and Chris Sale (\$30 million).

They'll combine to make just over \$72 million this season. That's more than six franchises will pay their entire rosters: Seattle (\$66 million), Miami (\$47 million), Tampa (\$57 million), Baltimore (\$45 million), Pittsburgh (\$43 million) and Cleveland (\$40 million).

The Red Sox in 2021 pretty much know what they'll get with Devers, Eovaldi and Sale.

Devers is an MVP candidate who wasn't the same player when he left Fort Myers last March and returned in July. He was a little heavier and wasn't 100% physically.

But he began finding an "MVP-like" groove, going 29 for 66 (.439) with 7 homers and 20 RBI over a 17-game stretch from Aug. 30 to Sept. 17.

Eovaldi had six starts last summer and was pretty good, going 4-2 with a 3.72 ERA over 48 innings. He didn't go deep, averaging just over five innings in nine starts.

But there were concerning elbow issues in 2019, which meant he was brought along carefully.

And, in 2021, Sale will probably be off-limits, allowing him to recover completely from Tommy John surgery he underwent last March.

Due to his contract — he's signed through 2025 — the Red Sox would rather have him ready on Opening Day 2022.



AP photo/Patrick Semansky

J.D. Martinez has exceeded the massive expectations placed upon him.

See **MARTINEZ**, Page S13

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Call him 'A-Rod' — for Ace Rodriguez

57 North of Boston Media Group • 2021 RED SOX PREVIEW • Friday, March 26, 2021

BY BILL BURT

It wasn't Eduardo Rodriguez's finest moment.

After five epic innings in which the Red Sox left-hander had allowed the Los Angeles Dodgers only two hits, the score in Game 4 of the 2018 World Series was 0-0.

Then the Dodgers batted in the sixth.

There was a hit batsman, a strikeout, a double, an intentional walk, an error by the catcher on an attempted double play, and the finale, a three-run homer by Yasiel Puig.

E-Rod's reaction after Puig's homer? He took off his glove with his left hand and fired it into the ground.

It was classic Little League.

The Red Sox came back and won the game, 9-6, to go ahead 3-1 in the series. But E-Rod heard about his lack of sportsmanship.

There were apologies, etc., and upon further review some weeks later, it wasn't that big of a deal.

As E-Rod said, "Batters can fire their bats when they mess up, and it's not a big deal."

It may have been E-Rod's biggest blunder since turning the corner. When the guy with a reputation for both an attitude problem and his "great stuff," who was acquired for then top-lefty reliever Andrew Miller, turned into, well, a winner.

And — get this — a leader.

"I cannot tell you how impressed I have become with Eduardo's leadership and how he has matured," said shortstop Xander Bogaerts, one of E-Rod's closest friends on the team.

"It wasn't long away that he was hanging around guys like Chris and David, sponging off them," said Bogaerts. "Now he's the guy talking to the young pitchers. It's impressive to watch. He's absolutely one of our team leaders."

Not adding up

That was not E-Rod from 2015 through 2017. While there were good signs — especially during his rookie year — injuries, consistency and elite production were spotty.

It didn't add up. His swing-and-miss numbers ranked among the Top 10 pitchers in baseball, and



AMANDA SABGA/Staff photo

Red Sox pitcher Eduardo Rodriguez pitches during the 2018 American League Division Series between the Red Sox and New York Yankees at Fenway Park.

he averaged more than a strikeout per inning.

That rookie season, with E-Rod being called in at the end of May, appeared to be a big tease.

Through three starts and 20 2/3 innings, he'd allowed one run and eight hits, while striking out 21.

Then, over his next six starts, he allowed nine runs, one run, six runs, one run, one run, two runs and seven runs.

He ended his rookie campaign 10-6 with a 3.85 ERA. He allowed two or fewer runs in 16 of 21 starts. It appeared we had a future Cy Young Award candidate.

But the next two seasons were the opposite. He went a combined 9-14 with a 4.42 ERA.

Nagging injuries forced him out for three months worth of starts over those two years.

Then, in 2018, E-Rod underwent surgery to repair his kneecap. More importantly, he joined a pitching staff with Chris Sale, David Price, Rick Porcello and Nathan Eovaldi, all seasoned veterans, including two (Porcello and Price) who were Cy Young Award winners and one (Sale) who'd been a Top 5 finisher for the award for five straight years from 2013-2017.

E-Rod was 11-3 just after the All-Star break in 2018, when he suffered a broken ankle in a freakish play while covering first base.

He lost six weeks and had an 18-win season going for him.

He finished the season 13-5. Due to his spot as No. 5 starter, he was sent to the bullpen for the postseason.

He allowed three runs his first

outing, a 6-2 loss to the Yankees, and then those four runs in Game 4 to the Dodgers.

In five outings in between, he didn't allow a hit or run over 2 2/3 innings.

A different year

The Red Sox pitching staff remained exactly the same to start the 2019 season.

It just didn't end that way.

Sale, Price and Eovaldi each suffered arm injuries, missing a combined 30 or so starts.

This time, E-Rod was the horse. More impressive, he did it despite issues not only with the starting pitching and bullpen (Craig Kimbrel left as free agent), the Red Sox offense also dropped a peg or two after the World Series.

E-Rod was on his game in 2019,

going 18-6 with a 3.81 ERA while pitching over 200 innings for the first time in his career.

He finished sixth in the A.L. Cy Young Award voting.

Last year was a lost year.

E-Rod missed the shortened season due to his contracting the COVID-19 virus and later coming up with issues related to his heart.

The Red Sox smartly closed down his season when it was clear that 2020 wasn't going to be their year.

But 2021 is different.

The Red Sox will have a few new names in the rotation, maybe even a rookie, which is OK.

It's all part of the process.

And the Red Sox have a guy in the rotation who understands the growing pains.

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MAKING HIS MOVES

After a quiet start, Bloom is roster-building in Year 2

BY BILL BURT

A year ago, Chaim Bloom's activity was conspicuous because of its absence.

The rookie Red Sox president of baseball operations did almost nothing in Year One.

He did, of course, trade Mookie Betts (and David Price), though in reality that was *fait accompli* upon his acceptance of the position.

He also named Ron Roenicke interim manager, elevating him from bench coach after Alex Cora was let go or suspended.

Otherwise, most of the coaches remained the same. There weren't binders delivered to all employees, yet, with new Red Sox-Bloom philosophies.

Bloom had an undermanned team, which was whacked by COVID-19, lost its ace in Eduardo Rodriguez, and picked up a few one-year additions. Otherwise he was like a church mouse.

"I think there's probably more change in some senses in the way that we tried to operate behind the scenes," Bloom told me in December. "Although even with that, I had so much respect for the group here and how much they've accomplished over time that I wanted to learn from them to try to see how I could help them take everything they do to the next level. And some of that is going to come over time, and I think you will see this organization continue to evolve over time."

It was a long-winded answer that basically said: We've made more changes than you realize. You just can't see it on the field.

Not long after that December Q&A, Bloom went to work.

Over three months he signed 28 free agents, claimed four off waivers, and probably most impressively, made five trades.

Among the eye-openers was a trade with the New York Yankees, sacrilege



Boston Red Sox Chief Baseball Officer Chaim Bloom, right, speaks to a player during baseball training camp at Fenway Park, Monday, July 6, 2020, in Boston.

AP photo/Elise Amendola

around here, acquiring reliever Adam Ottavino, a monumental disappointment in the Bronx, and a promising pitching prospect (Frank German) by eating most of Ottavino's \$8 million contract in 2021.

Speaking of the Yankees, Bloom snapped up promising pitcher Garrett Whitlock, who played in Double-A Trenton last year, in the Rule 5 draft.

He signed a few semirisky free agents, including once-promising starter Garrett Richards to a one-year,

\$10 million deal.

Then there was Enrique Kiké Hernandez, coming off a tough season like a lot of players, signed to a two-year, \$14 million deal.

Bloom not only traded Andrew Benintendi to the Royals for a major risk in Franchy Cordero, he finished killing off the "Killer B's" by letting Jackie Bradley Jr. leave for free agency.

As for most of the Red Sox roster in 2021, there are a lot of unknown or semi-known players on short leashes.

It's not unlike the Tampa

Bay Rays, Bloom's former employer for 15 years, who made it to Game 7 of the 2020 World Series. That roster was made up of a lot of what we're now seeing in Boston — tough guys who can give you something in the short term rather than MVP numbers over a season.

Things are going to be different around here, with a roster nearly completely different from the 2018 World Series champs, when All-Stars and high-priced talent littered the dugout per old

president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski.

A guy like Bradley, who was adored for his defense, was not adored enough offensively, by Bloom, to pay upwards of \$15 million per year to stay.

It may take a while, as in two years or maybe three, for the Red Sox to be at the top of the American League East as favorites.

But, at the very least, based on Bloom's actions the last three months, there is a plan.

And that's a start.

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BY BILL BURT

HERE TO STAY

A close call
when catcher
was on trade
market

The 2021 Red Sox are not favored to win anything for a reason -- a lack of star power, roster of unproven pitchers and the absence of brute power.

Looking at the positives, Rafael Devers tops the list, with Xander Bogaerts and Eduardo Rodriguez maybe tied for second. There's Nathan Eovalid, the clubhouse inspiration of the 2018 World Series.

And then there's catcher Christian Vazquez.

There was a time not long ago when it appeared that Red Sox head of baseball operations Chaim Bloom was offering up Vazquez as a trade chip, possibly for a top reliever or No. 3 starter.

With Bloom wheeling and dealing on the Bill Belichick market, which is to say looking for low-cost talent, Vazquez never got dealt.

That's a good thing.

Vazquez's season as the No. 1 catcher, in 2019, following his getting the nod for 12 of 14 postseason games in 2018, was impressive. He posted career highs in games played (138), homers (23), doubles (26), RBI (72) and walks (33).

His 2020 COVID-19 shortened season wasn't too shabby, either, with a slight drop in homers and RBI if spread out for an entire season.

But the biggest thing for catchers is catching, which means helping run the pitching staff.

Vazquez's defense is what got him to The Show at age 23 as a Sox backup in 2014.

He's had Jason Varitek around as a catching

See **VAZQUEZ**, Page S12

AMANDA SABGA/Staff photo

Red Sox catcher Christian Vazquez at bat during Game 2 of the American League Championship Series against the Houston Astros at Fenway Park in 2018.

CHRISTIAN VAZQUEZ CAREER STATS

Year	Age	G	PA	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	CS	BB	SO	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
2014	23	55	201	175	15	42	9	0	1	20	0	0	19	33	.240	.308	.309	.617
2015: Missed season																		
2016	25	57	184	172	21	39	9	1	1	12	0	0	10	39	.227	.277	.308	.585
2017	26	99	345	324	43	94	18	2	5	32	7	2	17	64	.290	.330	.404	.735
2018	27	80	269	251	24	52	10	0	3	16	4	1	13	41	.207	.257	.283	.540
2019	28	138	521	482	66	133	26	1	23	72	4	2	33	101	.276	.320	.477	.798
2020	29	47	189	173	22	49	9	0	7	23	4	3	16	43	.283	.344	.457	.801
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VAZQUEZ

■ Continued from Page S10

coordinator and sounding board.

“A lot of people thought when he was coming up and when he got to the big leagues that he was going to win a Gold Glove,” manager Alex Cora said in February. “That hasn’t happened yet. We want the complete package. We want the best version of Christian Vazquez for 162 games.”

Cora was one person in Vazquez’s corner when it came to trade talks. It wasn’t just because of a shared heritage and hometowns that are nearby, south of the Puerto Rican capital of San Juan. It was based on past production and, Cora says, leadership.

Vazquez let it be known early that he wanted Cora to take over the team again after his year away.

“He was a great leader for us in 2018 and 2019,” said Vazquez. “He got us to play 110%. He has brought back energy to the clubhouse. I’m very happy to have him back.”

The feeling was -- and apparently still is -- mutual.

That’s probably why Vazquez didn’t get dealt and is coming back

as the No. 1 catcher.

Cora would probably take 125 games from Vazquez, at most, with highly regarded backup Kevin Plawecki around to pick up the slack.

Vazquez, by all appearances, is ready for the job.

He arrived in Fort Myers with a body stronger than it’s ever appeared. At 5-foot-9 he could pass for a weight lifter, which is pretty much what he was from December through February.

“He’s in the best shape of his life,” Cora said before the media got its first look at Vazquez. “He invested in himself.”

Vazquez is signed through this season at \$6.25 million, the last year of a three-year, \$13.35 million deal.

The Red Sox can re-up Vazquez in 2022 for \$7 million, which at this point is a no-brainer.

Vazquez has a lot of work ahead of him, with a pitching staff that could have seven, eight or nine unproven arms, particularly at the beginning.

That’s where Vazquez comes in — a complete player, a guy who can bat fifth or sixth possibly, and someone who can help with efficiency when the other team is up.

Remember the old adage: The best move you make sometimes is



Red Sox catcher Christian Vazquez, right, celebrates his home run with third base coach Carlos Febles during the seventh inning against the Houston Astros on June 2, 2018, in Houston.

AP photo/
David J. Phillip

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J.D. MARTINEZ CAREER STATS

Year	Age	Tm	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	CS	BB	SO	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
2011	23	HOU	53	208	29	57	13	0	6	35	0	1	13	48	.274	.319	.423	.742
2012	24	HOU	113	395	34	95	14	3	11	55	0	2	40	96	.241	.311	.375	.685
2013	25	HOU	86	296	24	74	17	0	7	36	2	0	10	82	.250	.272	.378	.650
2014	26	DET	123	441	57	139	30	3	23	76	6	3	30	126	.315	.358	.553	.912
2015	27	DET	158	596	93	168	33	2	38	102	3	2	53	178	.282	.344	.535	.879
2016	28	DET	120	460	69	141	35	2	22	68	1	2	49	128	.307	.373	.535	.908
2017	29	TOT	119	432	85	131	26	3	45	104	4	0	53	128	.303	.376	.690	1.066
2017	29	DET	57	200	38	61	13	2	16	39	2	0	29	54	.305	.388	.630	1.018
2017	29	ARI	62	232	47	70	13	1	29	65	2	0	24	74	.302	.366	.741	1.107
2018	30	BOS	150	569	111	188	37	2	43	130	6	1	69	146	.330	.402	.629	1.031
2019	31	BOS	146	575	98	175	33	2	36	105	2	0	72	138	.304	.383	.557	.939
2020	32	BOS	54	211	22	45	16	0	7	27	1	0	22	59	.213	.291	.389	.680
Totals			1122	4183	622	1213	254	17	238	738	25	11	411	1129	.290	.354	.530	.883

MARTINEZ

■ Continued from Page S4

Which brings us to Martinez.

No sure thing

Normally a .300 hitter with 35-homers and 100 RBI, Martinez isn't the sure thing in 2021 that he was in 2018 and 2019.

But if the Sox have any chance — with so many question marks in other areas like starting pitching, bullpen and the new outfield — he'll need to find his rhythm.

Martinez finished 4th for the MVP in 2018, and 21st in 2019.

Then, in 2020, he hit .213 with 7 home runs.

Martinez complained

about the loss of video work during games after it was banned due to violations by the Astros and Red Sox in previous seasons.

He also admitted he deserved blame for his disappointing short season last year.

"I didn't stay ready," he said, referring to the time when it wasn't clear there would be a season at all. "I

wasn't really prepared.

"This year I said to myself, 'They're not getting me again. They're not catching me off guard.' So I stayed ready the whole time," he said.

Was 2020 a mental lapse? Was he not in the right frame of mind?

While he's only 33, which is still young by modern standards for pro athletes,

Martinez looked and played older as a full-time designated hitter in 2020.

"Obviously everyone is going to point out last year," said Red Sox manager Alex Cora.

"J.D. is a proud individual," said Cora. "Over the course of his career, he has proved people wrong. It won't be a surprise for me if returns to being the same guy."

The odds appear to be on his side, favoring a return to some semblance of the guy the Red Sox signed.

As for Martinez, you can guess where he puts his chips.

"I'm not one to talk. I like to talk with my bat and my ball in the field and, you know, let my bat do the talking," he said.

"We'll see what happens."

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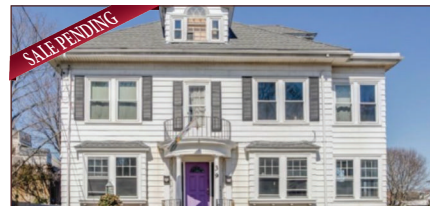
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Burt's MLB picks for 2021

AMERICAN LEAGUE

EAST

Yankees
*Rays
Blue Jays
Red Sox
Orioles

CENTRAL

White Sox
Twins
Indians
Royals
Tigers

WEST

Astros
*Angels
A's
Mariners
Rangers

NATIONAL LEAGUE

EAST

Mets
*Phillies
Nationals
Braves
Marlins

CENTRAL

Brewers
Cardinals
Cubs
Reds
Pirates

WEST

Dodgers
*Padres
D-backs
Giants
Rockies

AL POSTSEASON

WILD CARD

Ray over Angels

ALDS

Yankees over Rays
White Sox over Astros

ALCS

Yankees over White Sox

NL POSTSEASON

WILD CARD

Padres over Phillies

NLDS

Mets over Brewers
Padres over Dodgers

NLCS

Mets over Padres

New York Yankees starting pitcher Gerrit Cole (45) delivers in the third inning of Game 1 of an American League wild-card baseball series against the Cleveland Indians, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020, in Cleveland.

AP photo/
David
Dermer



New York Mets Jacob deGrom (48) smiles in the dugout after scoring on Neil Walker's seventh-inning, RBI double in an interleague baseball game, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2016, in New York. DeGrom, the Mets starting pitcher, went two for three in his at-bats.

AP photo/Kathy Willens

WORLD SERIES: METS TO WIN SUBWAY SERIES

It's taken a while — just over two decades — but it's going to happen again. The Yankees and the Mets, first meeting for a World Series in October of 2000. They are among the top five teams in baseball, and neither will have an easy road there. Again the Dodgers will be the best team in baseball, but they won't meet the lofty expectations with some hungry teams chasing, including division rival in San Diego, which will have the talent to compete. The Mets are loaded, too, and their year is here. The same with the Yankees, which will need a late-July trade, probably for a big-time pitcher, to officially put them over the top in the American League. The Yankees need a healthy Aaron Judge and it's time Giancarlo Stanton earned his keep, which will happen in 2021. I like both of these teams to excite baseball fans worldwide with a classic Subway Series. This time it'll be the New York Mets, adding two stars in Francisco Lindor and Carlos Carrasco, winning in seven games.

MLB PROJECTED TOTAL WINS 2021

Team..... 2021 Wins Total Line

Arizona Diamondbacks.....	74.5	Milwaukee Brewers.....	82.5
Atlanta Braves.....	91.5	Minnesota Twins.....	88.5
Baltimore Orioles.....	64.5	New York Yankees.....	95.5
Boston Red Sox.....	80.5	New York Mets.....	90.5
Chicago White Sox.....	91.5	Oakland Athletics.....	87.5
Chicago Cubs.....	79.5	Philadelphia Phillies.....	80.5
Cincinnati Reds.....	82.5	Pittsburgh Pirates.....	59.5
Cleveland Indians.....	81.5	San Diego Padres.....	94.5
Colorado Rockies.....	64.5	San Francisco Giants.....	75.5
Detroit Tigers.....	68.5	Seattle Mariners.....	72.5
Houston Astros.....	86.5	St. Louis Cardinals.....	86.5
Kansas City Royals.....	72.5	Tampa Bay Rays.....	85.5
Los Angeles Angels.....	83.5	Texas Rangers.....	66.5
Los Angeles Dodgers.....	101.5	Toronto Blue Jays.....	86.5
Miami Marlins.....	70.5	Washington Nationals.....	84.5



MLB 2021 MVP PROP BETS

2021 AL MVP ODDS

Player	Odds Fractional	
Mike Trout (L.A. Angels)	+200	2/1
Alex Bregman (Houston)	+1000	10/1
Aaron Judge (N.Y. Yankees)	+1200	12/1
Jose Ramirez (Cleveland)	+1200	12/1
Matt Chapman (Oakland)	+1500	15/1
Anthony Rendon (L.A. Angels)	+1500	15/1
Jose Abreu (Chicago White Sox)	+2500	25/1
Vladimir Guerrero Jr. (Toronto)	+2500	25/1
Yohan Moncada (Chicago White Sox)	+2500	25/1
Luis Robert (Chicago White Sox)	+2500	25/1
Gleyber Torres (N.Y. Yankees)	+2500	25/1
Rafael Devers (Boston)	+3000	30/1
Yasmani Grandal (Chicago White Sox)	+3000	30/1
Eloy Jimenez (Chicago White Sox)	+3000	30/1
George Springer (Toronto)	+3000	30/1
Tim Anderson (Chicago White Sox)	+3300	33/1
Yordan Alvarez (Houston)	+3300	33/1
Bo Bichette (Toronto)	+3300	33/1
Xander Bogaerts (Boston)	+3300	33/1
D.J. LeMahieu (N.Y. Yankees)	+3300	33/1
Shohei Ohtani (L.A. Angels)	+3300	33/1
Jose Altuve (Houston)	+4000	40/1
Carlos Correa (Houston)	+4000	40/1
Matt Olson (Oakland)	+4000	40/1
Giancarlo Stanton (N.Y. Yankees)	+4000	40/1
Kyle Tucker (Houston)	+4000	40/1
Randy Arozarena (Tampa Bay)	+5000	50/1
Josh Donaldson (Minnesota)	+5000	50/1
Joey Gallo (Texas)	+5000	50/1
Ramon Laureno (Oakland)	+5000	50/1
Kyle Lewis (Seattle)	+5000	50/1
J.D. Martinez (Boston)	+5000	50/1
Austin Meadows (Tampa Bay)	+5000	50/1

2021 NL MVP ODDS

Player	Odds Fractional	
Juan Soto (Washington)	+750	15/2
Mookie Betts (L.A. Dodgers)	+750	15/2
Cody Bellinger (L.A. Dodgers)	+800	8/1
Ronald Acuna Jr. (Atlanta)	+850	17/2
Fernando Tatis Jr. (San Diego)	+850	17/2
Nolan Arenado (St. Louis)	+1200	12/1
Freddie Freeman (Atlanta)	+1200	12/1
Francisco Lindor (N.Y. Mets)	+1200	10/1
Christian Yelich (Milwaukee)	+1200	12/1
Bryce Harper (Philadelphia)	+1500	15/1
Corey Seager (L.A. Dodgers)	+1500	15/1
Manny Machado (San Diego)	+2200	22/1
Trevor Story (Colorado)	+2500	25/1
Ozzie Albies (Atlanta)	+3000	30/1
Kris Bryant (Chicago Cubs)	+3000	30/1
Ketel Marte (Arizona)	+3000	30/1
J.T. Realmuto (Philadelphia)	+3000	30/1
Anthony Rizzo (Chicago Cubs)	+3000	30/1
Pete Alonso (N.Y. Mets)	+3300	33/1
Javier Baez (Chicago Cubs)	+3300	33/1
Paul Goldschmidt (St. Louis)	+3300	33/1
Michael Conforto (N.Y. Mets)	+4000	40/1
Rhys Hoskins (Philadelphia)	+4000	40/1
Max Muncy (L.A. Dodgers)	+4000	40/1
Charlie Blackmon (Colorado)	+5000	50/1
Alec Bohm (Philadelphia)	+5000	50/1
Paul DeJong (St. Louis)	+5000	50/1
Trent Grisham (San Diego)	+5000	50/1
Jeff McNeil (N.Y. Mets)	+5000	50/1

Source: Vegas Insider



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THE FIVE QUESTION MARKS

Red Sox relying heavily on new talent with interesting resumes

BY BILL BURT

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There are some well-known “fives” out there: The Jackson Five, Five Guys burger joint, “The Five” on Fox and the Fab Five on the University of Michigan basketball team in the early ‘90s.

The particular five-some of Hunter Renfroe, Franchy Cordero, Bobby Dalbec, Enrique Hernandez and Garrett Richards isn’t so well known. But in New England, particularly Kenmore Square, they could be very important, and hopefully will become household names.

The five new members of the Red Sox aren’t especially worthy of a nickname. In fact, we’ll call them the Five Question Marks.

All will probably be playing nearly every day, or find a place in the starting rotation.

Here are introductions and what to expect, or hope for, from each.

Hunter Renfroe

Age: 29

Experience: 4-plus seasons

Position: Outfield

Spot in lineup: 6th to 8th

Best season: 2018 with Padres; .246, 26 HR, 68 RBI
Contract: 1 year, \$3.3 million

The Skinny: Renfroe is coming off a trip to the World Series with Tampa Bay and could be considered in his “prime” at 29. Chosen 13th overall out of Mississippi State in 2013 by San Diego, he debuted with the Padres in 2016 and hit .231 with 26 HRs in 122 games in 2017. A year later he hit 26 HRs again and cut his strikeout rate. In 2019, he finished tied for 20th in NL with 33 HRs while his strikeout rate grew – third highest in the NL. As a defender, he has a



Playing for the Padres, Hunter Renfroe gestures as he crosses home plate after hitting a solo home run off Colorado Rockies starting pitcher Jon Gray during the fourth inning of a game in May 2019 in Denver.

AP photos

good arm, making right field his probable home, and had an elite year tracking balls, too.

Renfroe was dealt to Tampa, and like a lot of players, he didn’t take well to the pandemic season, hitting only .156 with 8 HRs in 42 games.

Goal: The hope is that Renfroe could possibly turn into a consistent No. 5 or No. 6 hitter, adding much-needed power, as in 30-plus homers. He won’t be Mookie Betts in right field, but if he’s got 75% of Betts defensive prowess, he could help the Red Sox a lot.

Franchy Cordero

Age: 26

Experience: 4 seasons but only 95 games

Position: Outfield

Spot in lineup: 7th

Best season: 2018, .237 avg., 7 HR, 19 RBI

Contract: Arbitration eligible, \$800,000 in 2021

The Skinny: He could be the steal of the Red Sox 2021 off-season. Or he could be just another guy who doesn’t statistically match what our eyes are telling us. Cordero is a player with ridiculous speed, big-time raw power and an above average arm. Signed out of the

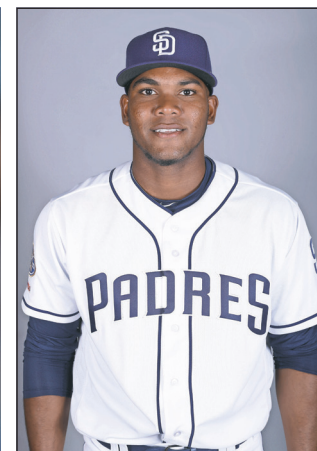
Dominican Republic at 17 in 2011, Cordero’s offense was way ahead of his defense (shortstop). He was eventually moved to the outfield. He showed some big pop in the minors with 17 HRs in 93 games in Triple-A in 2017, but he never showed consistency when opportunities came in San Diego, often shuttling to Class AAA and back. He also struggled with injuries.

In 2019, Cordero started the season well but played in only nine games before the injury bug took another bite out of him. A forearm injury from 2018 was still

nagging him to begin the season. While rehabbing in Triple-A, he suffered yet another injury, this time a quadriceps injury that would prevent him from returning to the majors in 2019.

Once again, injuries prevented Cordero from getting an opportunity to show the Padres what he can do, and he was dealt to Kansas City in mid-July last year. The Royals didn’t see enough to keep him around and dealt him to the Red Sox in the three-team deal with the Mets.

Goal: Franchy surprises



Franchy Cordero, then a member of the San Diego Padres, in 2019.

everyone and becomes a semi-consistent performer. He’s another 30-homer potential guy who has the ability to be a solid defender. If you can’t make it in Kansas City, which seems to have a treasure trove of young talent that’s been allowed to blossom patiently, it doesn’t make much sense that it’ll happen in the pressure cooker in Boston. But if it works out ... wow!

Bobby Dalbec

Age: 25

Experience: 1 year

Position: First base/third base

Spot in lineup: 7th or 8th

Best season: 2020, .263 avg., 8 HRs, 16 RBI

Contract: \$575,000 in 2021

The Skinny: Dalbec is not a new name. We were introduced to him a year ago. But this time, he’ll be playing nearly every day. The fact that he hit a home run in his first at bat this spring didn’t hurt his cause. Not counting short season-A ball for the Lowell Spinners, he never hit higher than .261 in three full minor league seasons. But his 79 HR in 383 games is a nice number.

His eight HRs in 23 games



last year wasn't shabby either; his average at .263 was his career best. Basically, he wasn't intimidated by playing in Boston with the Red Sox. But this will be different because he will play a lot, depending on his output, at first base.

As a third baseman, he should be above average playing across the diamond.

Three of his first four hits this spring were homers. Again, he appears at home here.

Goal: If Dalbec can bring it defensively, adding value, his batting average, even hovering at .250, won't be a bad thing with his continued power numbers. He could be another 25 to 30-homer guy, which the Sox have a lot of ... could be! Long-term, 30 homers will be the number if Dalbec plays here for any length of time. As for 2021, he's a sleeper who isn't really a sleeper. The Red Sox need a good Dalbec season with so many question marks.

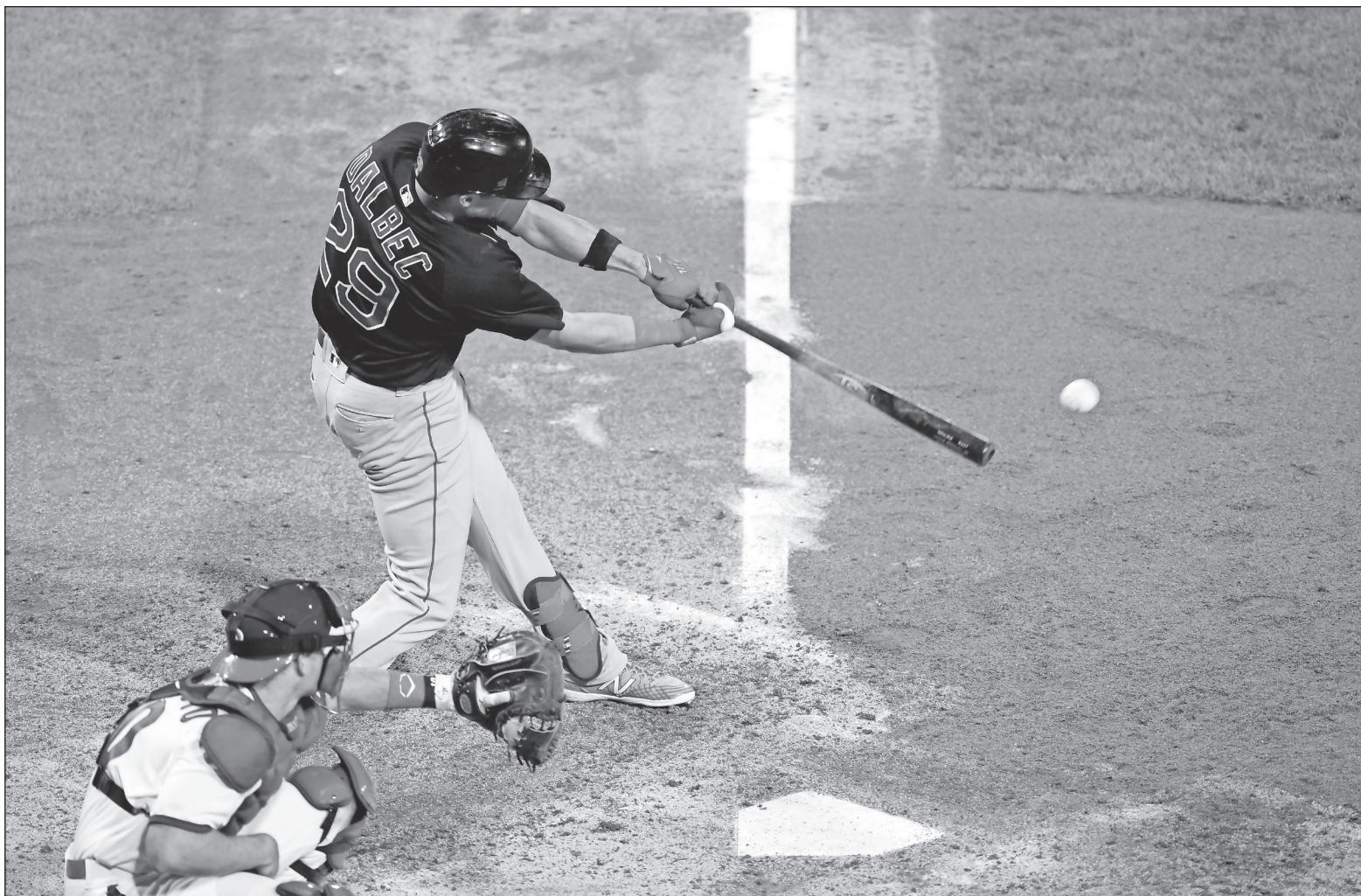
Enrique "Kiké" Hernández

Age: 29
Experience: 7 years
Position: Second base
Spot in lineup: 2nd or 9th
Best season: 2018, .256 avg., 21 HRs, 56 RBI

Contract: 2 years, \$14 million
The Skinny: An everyday player with the Dodgers the last four seasons, Hernández struggled mightily during the shortened pandemic season in 2020 with a very poor on-base percentage of .270 with only six walks in 48 games. That doesn't cut it in places like Boston, New York and L.A. But he brings a lot of positive energy to go with some sneaky power and elite play in the field, which the Red Sox need at the position with Dustin Pedroia's official retirement.

Hernández is a potential leader if he can come through on the field. He's one of the most well liked players in the league. He arrives as a big fan of Sox manager Alex Cora. If Cora believes in him, which became a problem for Hernández last year in L.A., then maybe his career takes a path in the right direction.

Goal: The Red Sox need the 2018 Kiké, who was a threat on both sides of the ball. He was outstanding against right-handed pitchers, which hadn't always been the case. He's another guy who could pop 20-plus homers if he plays enough, which he should if his offense is decent.



AP photos

Bobby Dalbec hits a run-scoring single off Philadelphia Phillies pitcher Heath Hembree during the seventh inning in Philadelphia in September 2020.

Garrett Richards

Age: 32
Experience: 10 years
Position: Starting pitcher
Spot in rotation: No. 3 through 5
Best season: 2014, 13-4, 2.61 ERA
Contract: 2 years, \$18.5 million; second year (\$10 million) is Sox option or \$1.5 million buyout.

The Skinny: Red Sox head of baseball operations Chaim Bloom has taken some fliers on guys this season, and Richards tops the list due to his guaranteed salary of \$10 million, which includes a \$1.5 million buyout if it doesn't work out. Richards can pitch ... when he's on and he's healthy. That's the big question: Will he be on and healthy?

It's been two years since his Tommy John surgery, which killed his 2019 season. But he showed some decent results in 2020 over 10 starts with the Padres, going 2-2 with a 4.03 ERA. The fear of him not being a strikeout guy again never materialized. He wasn't outstanding, but he was solid in averaging five innings per



Then playing second base for the Dodgers, Enrique "Kiké" Hernández throws to first after forcing out Astros' Michael Brantley during the eighth inning at Dodger Stadium. The Sox officially announced the signing of Hernández to a two-year contract in February.

start. He's had only one 200-inning season (2015) when he went 15-12 with a 3.65 ERA, a year after his impressive 13-4, 2.61 showing in 2014. But that was like a lifetime ago.

Goal: That Richards can grow off his 2020 season after the surgery. If he found his comfort zone last year then this could be a nice season with a pretty good lineup and bullpen supporting



Garrett Richards played for the Los Angeles Angels in 2012.

him. It would be ideal if he could go six full innings per start, alleviating any bullpen issues. If he could revert back to 2014-15, then the Red Sox have a steal in their rotation.

RED SOX

2021 SCHEDULE

APRIL

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 BAL	2	3 BAL
4 BAL	5 TB	6 TB	7 TB	8 BAL	9	10 BAL
11 BAL	12 MIN	13 MIN	14 MIN	15 MIN	16 CWS	17 CWS
18 CWS	19 CWS	20 TOR	21 TOR	22 SEA	23 SEA	24 SEA
25 SEA	26	27 NYM	28 NYM	29 TEX	30 TEX	

MAY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 TEX
2 TEX	3	4 DET	5 DET	6 DET	7 BAL	8 BAL
9 BAL	10 BAL	11 OAK	12 OAK	13 OAK	14 LAA	15 LAA
16 LAA	17	18 TOR	19 TOR	20 TOR	21 PHI	22 PHI
23 PHI	24	25 ATL	26 ATL	27	28 MIA	29 MIA
30 MIA	31 HOU					

JUNE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 HOU	2 HOU	3 HOU	4 NYY	5 NYY
6 NYY	7	8 HOU	9 HOU	10 HOU	11 TOR	12 TOR
13 TOR	14 TOR	15 ATL	16 ATL	17	18 KC	19 KC
20 KC	21	22 TB	23 TB	24 TB	25 NYY	26 NYY
27 NYY	28 KC	29 KC	30 KC			

JULY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 KC	2 OAK	3 OAK
4 OAK	5 LAA	6 LAA	7 LAA	8	9 PHI	10 PHI
11 PHI	12	13	14	15 NYY	16 NYY	17 NYY
18 NYY	19 TOR	20 TOR	21 TOR	22 NYY	23 NYY	24 NYY
25 NYY	26 TOR	27 TOR	28 TOR	29 TOR	30 TB	31 TB

AUGUST

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 TB	2	3 DET	4 DET	5 DET	6 TOR	7 TOR
8 TOR	9	10 TB	11 TB	12 TB	13 BAL	14 BAL
15 BAL	16	17 NYY	18 NYY	19	20 TEX	21 TEX
22 TEX	23	24 MIN	25 MIN	26 MIN	27 CLE	28 CLE
29 CLE	30 TB	31 TB				

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 TB	2 TB	3 CLE	4 CLE	
5 CLE	6 TB	7 TB	8 TB	9	10 CWS	11 CWS
12 CWS	13 SEA	14 SEA	15 SEA	16	17 BAL	18 BAL
19 BAL	20	21 NYM	22 NYM	23	24 NYY	25 NYY
26 NYY	27	28 BAL	29 BAL	30 BAL	1 WSH	2 WSH
3 WSH						

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U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, a long-time proponent of Consumer Protection has called on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to implement regulations for the skyrocketing Cannabinoid industry.

The thought of FDA oversight might send chills rippling through some purveyors of Cannabinoids or CBD. But the people behind one nationwide CBD Company not only welcome these regulations, they believe their corporate culture of transparency and self-regulation can set the standard for the industry as it moves forward, according to Rick & Laurie Smith, owners of Your CBD stores in Concord and Plaistow N.H.

Your CBD store and its parent company, Florida based Sun Flora, cultivate and sell only High Quality Phyto-Cannabinoid Rich, or PCR organic hemp products, specializing in tinctures, water solubles, topical creams, capsules, edibles, skin care and other high-end beauty products. Their process, through every aspect of Production, is done through guidelines "We regulate everything from soil to the oil, and use the most advanced third-party lab testing available in the industry" Smith said.

The Smiths, like Blumenthal is passionate about the need to regulate CBD and the infrastructure surrounding it. With consumers being thrust into a world with plenty of options, Your CBD Stores have become a benchmark in the industry for educating consumers on potential ways to improve their quality of life through CBD.

The Smiths believe consumers should know where the hemp is coming from, how it is grown, what strand of hemp is used, what process is employed to extract it, and whether that process includes harmful chemical solvents. There should be truth behind the plant science, and



what's healthy and safe for consumption, the Smiths say.

Your CBD Store took no shortcuts in setting up their operation from the very beginning, utilizing every resource at their disposal to ensure the production of only the highest quality hemp products. The hemp used to make Your CBD Store products are sourced only from a United States Department of Agriculture-regulated farm in Colorado, and then extracted as its CGMP + SQF level 3 FDA

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Your CBD Store extracts CBD from the plants using a special process which does not require the use of solvents or other chemicals. The Smiths and the Sun Flora company feel that this model should be regulatory standards for CBD companies of tomorrow.

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