



RED-LETTER DAYS

Boston's **REGULAR-SEASON HIGHLIGHTS** included a moving milestone, thrilling late-game comebacks and a forceful reminder to the rivals in New York that no, this wasn't going to be their year

by *Sam Brief*

10. Kimbrel reaches milestone after emotional journey (May 5)

Craig Kimbrel closed out a 6–5 win over the Rangers to become the fastest pitcher ever to reach 300 saves by appearances (494), save opportunities (330) and age (29). The record came after an offseason in which his daughter, Lydia Joy, needed heart surgery four days after being born in November, then again in March. Red Sox teammates supported Kimbrel with #LYDIASTRONG T-shirts.

9. Porcello rocks Nationals ace (July 2)

Batting against three-time Cy Young winner and former Tigers rotation mate Max Scherzer in the second inning, Rick Porcello (*above*) was down 0 and 2 with three men on base. He ripped a 96 mph fastball into the left-centerfield gap, clearing the bases and putting the Red Sox ahead 3–0 in a game they would win 4–3. Said Porcello of his first career double, “I got lucky.”

8. Red Sox top Rays with six-run rally (April 8)

A seven-game winning streak seemed in jeopardy at Fenway Park, with Boston trailing 7–2 with two outs



in the eighth. First baseman Mitch Moreland then roped a double that was the first of six consecutive hits, concluding with centerfielder Andrew Benintendi's double to put the Red Sox up 8–7. It was the first of Boston's 46 come-from-behind wins in 2018.

7. Brawl! Benches clear against Yankees (April 11)

Tempers flared at Fenway after reliever Joe Kelly beamed New York DH Tyler Austin in the seventh inning (*opposite, top*). Austin charged the mound, and both benches (and bullpens) cleared. Kelly, Austin and also Yankees third base coach Phil Nevin

and reliever Tommy Kahnle were ejected. The Yankees won the game, but the Sox took the season series 10–9.

6. Sale, Devers lead rout in the Bronx (June 30)

In a dominant display, the Red Sox embarrassed New York 11–0. Lefthander Chris Sale showed Cy Young form over seven scoreless innings, allowing one hit and striking out 11. Third baseman Rafael Devers led the offensive charge at Yankee Stadium, belting a grand slam in his first at bat and finishing 5 for 5.

ANDREW HARRIN/KAP/SHUTTERSTOCK



5. Phillips caps comeback win (Sept. 5)

Just a day after he was called up from the minors Brandon Phillips (*below*), a well-traveled infielder, played the hero in Atlanta. The Sox, who had trailed by six before mounting a game-tying rally in the eighth, fell behind by one again and were down to their final out when the 37-year-old Phillips crushed a two-run, 432-foot homer to left. Boston won 9–8.

4. Red Sox clinch AL East title at Yankee Stadium (Sept. 20)

Winning the division is always good, but doing it on your rival’s home turf adds an extra sweetness. An 11–6 rout in the Bronx gave the Red Sox their third straight AL East crown, a first in team history.

3. Betts crushes grand slam in 13-pitch at bat (July 12)

With the bases loaded in the fourth at Fenway, Mookie Betts and Blue Jays lefthander J.A. Happ engaged in an epic duel. The rightfielder fouled off six pitches before Happ heaved lucky number 13, which Betts belted over the Green Monster. Betts chucked his bat to the side, pumped his fist and flexed, a marquee moment in an MVP-caliber season.

2. Bogaerts hits walk-off slam (July 14)

Xander Bogaerts led the majors with three grand slams during the regular season, and the final one sent everyone home. Boston and Toronto were tied 2–2 in the bottom

of the 10th when the shortstop launched a shot to center. It was Boston’s first game-winning grand slam in extra innings since Jim Rice hit one in 1984.

1. Red Sox stamp out New York’s hope with comeback (Aug. 5)

The Yankees were 5½ games back and looked as if they might swipe the division title—until they came to Boston for a four-game set. After winning the first three, the Red Sox trailed 4–1 in the ninth inning of the finale. They scored three runs off closer Aroldis Chapman, then won it in the 10th on a two-out single by Benintendi, leaving no doubt who was the beast of the AL East. □



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