BRAYDEN'S BREAKDOWN:
BOSTON RED SOX POSTSEASON PREVIEW

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The Boston Red Sox clinched their second consecutive playoff berth Sunday and their third since 2021.

It was a season with the highest of highs and the lowest of lows in Boston as they started the season 10-17 before firing longtime manager Alex Cora.

In June, the Red Sox found themselves 14 games under .500 at a record of 32-46. This is when everything changed.

They swept the New York Yankees before losing two out of three games to the Washington Nationals.

The Red Sox went on the road and swept the Los Angeles Angels, Chicago White Sox and New York Mets to sit at 46-48 heading into the all-star break.

After nine straight road wins, the Red Sox headed home to face the 56-38 Tampa Bay Rays. Tampa has had Boston's number in the past few seasons, but this weekend was different.

In the first game of a doubleheader after the break, the Red Sox took care of business 10-0. Then in the night cap, Tampa Bay Rays took an early 2-0 before outfielder Wilyer Abreu decided the next 24 hours were all about him. He hit two home runs on the way to a 5-3 Red Sox win.

The next game was the defining game of the winning streak. The Rays were matching the Sox in scoring all-game before Abreu stepped to the plate down 6-5 in the seventh. Abreu crushed a two-run homer to right field, sending himself and Fenway Park into a frenzy. His fourth home run in 24 hours put Boston up 7-6, a lead they would hold for 12 consecutive wins.

They swept Tampa the next day before taking the first two games of the series versus the Orioles to tie a franchise record 15 straight wins. That first win did not come without drama. A back-and-forth game was knotted up in the eighth when Caleb Durbin smacked a game winning homerun to left field. The "Durbinator" had a rough start to the season but became one of the centerpieces of this win streak.

The streak would end at 15 but just a week later, Boston would rip off another nine straight wins. Durbin hit a walk-off single in an instant classic 12-11 victory against the White Sox. Ceddanne Rafaela became the king of LA for a few days after smacking four home runs in three games against the back-to-back champs.

So here we are, the Red Sox are 84-72 with a firm grip on the second wild card spot in the American League. Now, the New York Yankees stand in their way.

The Yankees beat the Red Sox 2-1 in the three-game wildcard series last year, and Boston is looking for revenge this season.

The pitching will be the key for both teams. Payton Tolle, Sonny Gray and Ranger Suarez will toe the rubber for Boston against the Yankees' Gerritt Cole, Max Fried and Massachusetts' own Cam Schlittler in the series.

In his first full season in the MLB, Tolle hit his stride. The southpaw posted a 3.02 ERA and a 10.4 K/9. He is also peaking at the right time, sporting a 0.75 ERA in two starts during September.

In a complete 180 from Tolle, Gray has been dominant in what may be his swan song in the majors. After being acquired via trade in the offseason, Gray has won 17 games, a career high for the veteran. He pitched 7.1 innings of one hit baseball while striking out nine in a June win over the Yankees.



Roman Anthony of the Boston Red Sox finishing a swing. The Red Sox won against the Tampa Bay Rays 4 to 2 on Friday, September 18, 2026. PHOTO COURTESY @REDSOX ON INSTAGRAM

Suarez signed a 5-year $130 million dollar contract with Boston in the offseason and has been solid as a member of the Sox. However, the 2026 all-star struggled in all three of his starts against the Yankees. The Bronx Bombers were 3-0 against Suarez.

Despite great performances by the Yankees, Suarez is a playoff pitcher. He had a 1.48 ERA in 42.2 postseason innings as a member of the Philadelphia Phillies. In Philadelphia's 2022 run to the World Series, the Phillies won all five games Suarez pitched in. He only allowed two earned runs in 14.2 innings pitched in 2022.

Along with the starters, the back of the bullpen has been nails for Boston. Erik Miller, Garrett Whitlock and Aroldis Chapman handled the seventh, eighth and ninth innings for interim manager Chad Tracy and the Red Sox. Miller came over at the trade deadline and did not allow an earned run in his first 10 appearances. Whitlock has been a staple in the Red Sox bullpen since 2021 and is possibly having his best year yet. He has a 1.75 ERA in 53 appearances. Chapman continues to age like fine wine. The 38-year-old was named an all-star for the second straight year and is 34/36 in save situations this year.

The rest of the hitters for the Red Sox will need to do some heavy lifting if they want to compete with the Yankees. Boston acquired Adley Rutschman at the deadline, and the catcher will be required to switch hit and catch in the playoffs. Wilson Contreras and Trevor Story will add postseason experience to the lineup while former top prospect Roman Anthony and local legend Mickey Gasper will look to provide during their first playoff at bats.

If the standings hold, the Red Sox and Yankees will battle in the Bronx on Tuesday for the wildcard series, a statement no Red Sox fan would have believed in June.

ELLIOT'S SATURDAY SLATE:
Looking back and looking ahead, your Week 4 slate

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Week 3 gave us one of the biggest payback games in college football history.

After Lane Kiffin's departure from Ole Miss last season, the Rebels got their payback in a 32-24 home victory against LSU.

This meeting made history with the only time a coach who left a program faced that team the following season in a top 10 matchup. The environment was hostile with tailgating starting at 5:30 a.m. for fans.

A major upset occurred when No. 9 Texas A&M fell to unranked Kentucky at home. A 21-point performance from the Wildcats in the third quarter extended their lead enough to hold on late.

The loss sent the Aggies plummeting 14 spots in the AP poll.

Alabama escaped an early scare against FSU after trailing 21-6 early in the game. Alabama quarterback Keelon Russell sparked a comeback for the Crimson Tide with a 20-point swing in the second half after a weather delay sent the teams into the locker room.

The Tide finished the game accumulating nearly 600 yards of offense in the 50-36 triumph.

No. 23 Louisville pulled away late for the dagger handing No. 16 SMU their first loss of the season. The Cardinals replaced the Mustangs in the No. 16 spot, sending the ponies to No. 22.

One of the biggest talking points of Week 3 came in a matchup between two unranked opponents in NC State and Vanderbilt.

The Wolfpack ended up on the wrong side of history becoming the second team in the last 20 seasons of college football to lose a game with the lead and the ball with 10 seconds remaining. Previous teams were 1,046-1, with the one loss coming between Michigan and Michigan State back in 2015 with the infamous "trouble with the snap" play.

This happened after NC State's quarterback CJ Bailey was strip-sacked in their endzone and recovered by the Commodores. This resulted in a Vanderbilt victory 35-31.

Now, shifting the focus to Week 4, it highlights an array of top 25 matchups displayed across multiple leagues with large conference championships on the line.

No.1 Texas travels to No. 14 Tennessee for both teams' first SEC matchup of the season. Arch Manning has looked like the best quarterback in the nation after the team's comeback against Ohio State in Week 2.

Staying with the SEC, No. 4 Ole Miss continues their tough schedule visiting No. 21 Florida in the swamp. The Gators are coming off a narrow five-point victory over Auburn, but the Rebels are one of the hottest teams in the country after they conquered LSU.

Texas A&M is set to take on LSU after both fell in Week 3, hoping to rebound in one of the toughest conferences. The SEC championship may already be out of the picture for these teams, but college playoffs are still on the line.

No. 19 Missouri and No. 24 Mississippi State also add to the SEC slate trying to gain wins against conference opponents.

The Big Ten also highlights top 25 matchups as No. 17 Iowa takes on No. 18 Michigan for both teams' first conference test. Michigan has improved since their Week 1 scare and Iowa was all gas and no breaks last week against Northern Iowa with a 55-0 win.

No. 20 Oregon travels to No. 12 Southern California with USC claiming their first Big Ten victory against Rutgers in a game many thought would not be so close. In the end, the Trojans secured a 42-35 victory.

Week 3 already answered questions about programs going against their toughest opponent yet, but now only have a week before another tough matchup.

It is still early in the season, but the margin for error is already slim with certain teams chasing the rise to the top.

Week 4 is up next, and the display of matchups keeps getting better.



The Texas Aggies tackling Jaden Williams of the Kentucky Wildcats. The Aggies lost 21-31 against the Wildcats on Saturday, September 19, 2026. PHOTO COURTESY OF @AGGIEFOOTBALL ON INSTAGRAM