

# ANATOMY OF A DOUBLEHEADER

batting practice and warming up on the same schedule as a regular night game — but that gets tricky, especially if he’s called into action late in the first game.

The same goes for others. Starter James Paxton, when he wasn’t tabbed for either game against the Red Sox, got in a core workout and some cycling in the middle of the afternoon contest, while Tauchman hit in the cage before he was inserted in the eighth inning in the first Boston game. “I think it’s impossible to stay mentally locked in over the course of a 12-hour, 18-inning day,” Tauchman says. “I think that’s why routines are important, because routines are like your body and mind’s checklist to prepare for competition.”

Immediately following the first game, many players will shower, change and head back to the cafeteria for a postgame meal. During the Aug. 3 doubleheader against Boston, Nimer and the rest of the clubhouse assistants set up a spread catered by Legends, which included a pasta station, more lean meat options such as chicken and steak, along with vegetables and salads. The clubhouse staff does its best to mix up the meals each night, placing orders from various local restaurants. “We get feedback from the guys; what they like and don’t like,” Nimer says. “But we have about eight to 12 different restaurants that have come in throughout the years, so we try not to do the same one more than once a month.”

More pressing for clubhouse assistants is laundry. The team has three industrial-size washers and dryers that attendants will rush to fill with sorted clothes. Each player has a backup jersey that is ready well before the second game (Sabathia has four or five at the ready, swapping every few innings on account of sweat), as it takes two hours to wash and dry everything.

“We were just joking about how we had nightmares of all the towels we got yesterday,” Nimer says. “There’s a lot of moving parts.” Each article of clothing is named and numbered with a heat press, so it’s easy to sort, though some superstitious players prefer not to wash certain articles of clothing.



IN BETWEEN GAMES OF A DOUBLEHEADER, THE GROUNDS CREW HAS A SHORT WINDOW TO GROOM THE FIELD FOR THE NIGHTCAP. HEAD GROUNDSKEEPER DAN CUNNINGHAM AND HIS STAFF WILL CONDITION THE DIRT WITH WATER AND REFURBISH THE MOUND WITH CLAY BEFORE THE FIELD IS SMOOTHED AND LINED FOR THE SECOND CONTEST.

The same process occurs in the visitors’ clubhouse, which is managed by Lou Cucuzza Jr., Rob’s brother. For the Red Sox, the laundry isn’t as rushed thanks to Boston alternating its gray tops with dark blue ones. “Some guys want to keep their pants on and just change their T-shirts and their jersey top,” Cucuzza says. That day, Cucuzza ordered Famous Dave’s barbecue for the Sox’s first postgame meal, enhancing it with more options from the clubhouse chefs and working with the team’s dietitians in case of any requests. “I’ll plan out menus probably a week to two prior,” he says. “We just try to lay out the whole week.”

Before Boone can eat, he needs to decide on the next game’s starter. After checking on the health of position players slated to play both games, Boone has his second “runway meeting,” and for both August doubleheaders, the group settles on Chad Green to open the second game, news that, along with the lineup, is announced about 30 minutes after the first game has been completed.

“I think that’s why they throw me into that situation, just because I am used to it,” says Green, who, through Aug. 12, opened 11 games and posted a 1.80 ERA, allowing three runs over 15 innings. “Leading up, you don’t want to sit and worry about it for three hours in between games. I’d say about 30 minutes before the game, you start getting loose again and getting mentally prepared.”

In the aftermath of the first game, as fans clear out of the Stadium, head groundskeeper Dan Cunningham and his dozen staff members begin to clean up the field. They condition the dirt with a light spray, even out the playing surface and add more clay to the mound. There’s not enough time to mow in between games, but they water the infield grass, condensing their typical postgame work into an hour.

Occasionally, players may get loose on the field, such as on Aug. 3, when shortstop Didi Gregorius took grounders to test his injured left hand and catcher Gary Sánchez practiced pop throws from behind the plate. Cunningham is usually warned a day in