

WEEI decides to turn off Mutnansky's Mike

By Chad Finn
GLOBE STAFF

Mike Mutnansky, who has been a host across various WEEI programs and time slots for more than a decade, said Tuesday night that he has been informed his contract will be next Tuesday.

Mutnansky has been a host at WEEI since 2009, first work-

ing weekends and fill-in duty before landing a full-time role in 2013 when he was paired in middays with former Red Sox infielder Lou Merloni.

Merloni, who has been an afternoon drive host at the station for the past four years, also confirmed earlier this week that he no longer will have a hosting role at the station after his contract expires at the end of the year.

The moves are part of a lineup shakeup that will include morning Christian Fauria from afternoon drive to middays and midday host Rich Keefe to evenings, where he will replace Mutnansky.

"I interned here before I worked here, so I've been at WEEI in some way, shape or form for a very long time," Mutnansky said on his Tuesday night show. "I like sports talk. I

love the immediacy of it, the urgency of it, big events, big games. I like the callers and the interactions and stuff like that."

Mutnansky, who said he was informed of the decision by station management on Friday, also served as the pregame and postgame host for the station's Red Sox broadcast.

"For the next week or so, we're going to do this show like we've done for over a decade,"

he said. "I've been on almost every spot on the station, from middays with Lou to nights to mornings as a third man in with the guys to hosting a morning show for a year to back here at nights. Whatever the role has been, we've done the show, and that will be the show."

Mutnansky has long been an advocate for sports betting in Massachusetts. He indicated that working in the sports bet-

ting industry may be part of his future.

"I think going forward after this time here is up next week, I'll be involved with that at some level, with that and in sports," he said. "It just will not be here."

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Don't give arrogant, negligent Red Sox credit in terms of Bogaerts

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he ultimately opted out of) on the below-market deal he signed in 2019. In essence, they offered him a four-year, \$90 million contract after they signed fellow shortstop Trevor Story for a six-year, \$141 million deal.

Bogaerts helped recruit Story, someone he knew might be used as leverage against him. He did the scuffles, team-oriented thing, and those in charge of the organization he had been a part of since he was 16 years old rewarded him by offering him \$51 million less and two fewer years than the new guy, a lesser player.

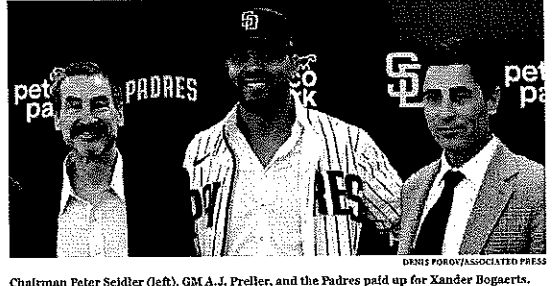
The offer was a tone-deaf insult to a player who deserved to match better. Yet in May, Bogaerts said he would be open to his agent, Scott Boras — who contrary to perception works for his clients and not vice versa — sitting down with Red Sox ownership during the season to go to hammer out a deal. At the All-Star break in July, Boras said, "My ears are always open," when

asked about Bogaerts's contract status.

And yet the Red Sox did nothing. There is no indication that they ever seriously attempted to keep a cornerstone player, the ideal of what a Red Sox star and leader should be, when they had the chance. You know they'd be shouting the length and terms of their best offer from atop the Green Monster right now if they ever had made a decent one.

By the time the Red Sox got around to offering him six years and \$160 million in free agency, it was too late. Bogaerts had multiple suitors offering far better terms than that. Much as they did with Jon Lester eight years ago, the Red Sox allowed a dedicated, homegrown, model Red Sox player to discover that there are other appealing options to play baseball.

For a hot minute, I thought it was possible that the Red Sox didn't want Bogaerts back at all, because ... well, you know, that's what their actions, or lack of action, seemed to indicate.



Chairman Peter Seidler (left), GM A.J. Preller, and the Padres paid up for Xander Bogaerts.

But ignoring their words and reconsidering those actions, including after Bogaerts went west, there really is just one logical conclusion for why they treated him the way that they did:

I don't think they thought he would ever have the nerve to leave, and they would eventually

get him at their price.

I'm convinced of this now. They knew he genuinely loved it here, and as they tried to turn his loyalty into their leverage Bogaerts went on the record again and again from spring training onward to reiterate his desire to remain in Boston, almost pleading at points. They got him to

take a below-market deal three years ago, against the wishes of Boras, and figured in the end they might be able to do it again.

That's the only explanation for Bloom's stunned response, especially documented in Friday's newspaper by colleague Julian McWilliams, when the Red Sox got word Bogaerts was tak-

ing the Padres' offer. They didn't expect him to get an offer of that magnitude. They expected all other offers to be in the ballpark of the six-year deal they eventually got around to proposing, and they assumed he wouldn't be the warning type if all things were relatively equal.

It's the only conclusion that makes sense. The massive offer that brought Bogaerts to San Diego came to be only because of the Red Sox' special combination of arrogance and negligence. They were so misguided in their pathetic desperation to win the deal that they lost a player who should have been a Red Sox for life.

Don't be suckered by the outcome and the jackpot. Don't give them the excuse. The Red Sox had months to keep Xander Bogaerts. Imagine if they'd had the sense to try.

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