

# 'Very, very important' week ahead for Yanks

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NEW YORK – The Yankees made a loud statement this past weekend, rising over challenges to pick up a series victory over the Red Sox at Yankee Stadium. Now, they've got to do it all over again.

The Yankees and Red Sox will meet for another four-game series beginning on Thursday, this time at Fenway Park in Boston. New York veteran outfielder Brett Gardner said that the club understands its situation and what will be asked of it.

"It's no secret who our biggest rivals are and where we're at in the standings," Gardner said. "We have a very, very important week of baseball coming up this next road trip. I feel like we've obviously played better against them here recently right after the break. We're looking forward to that matchup this weekend. It's always a fun place to play."

The Yankees opened the season winless in seven tries against the Red Sox before pulling out a rain-shortened, 3-1 victory this past Saturday, then coasting to a 9-1 rout in a nationally televised game on Sunday.

"When we were there a month or so ago [June 25-27], we obviously did not play our best baseball," Gardner said. "I feel like we're playing much better now. We know where we are in the standings and what we have to do to get to where we want to be. We've got to go up there and play some good ball and hopefully have a productive weekend."

Boston entered Wednesday at 57-38, a half-game ahead of Tampa

Bay (57-39) and seven games ahead of both Toronto (48-43) and New York (49-44). Yankees manager Aaron Boone said that, given his club's position in the postseason chase, every series is crucial from here to the finish line.

"We've got to play well, period," Boone said. "This weekend, because it's a division opponent, is maybe more important. If we're going to finish the season where we want to be, we know we've got to play a really consistent brand of baseball here over the last two-plus months."

After the four-game set in Boston, the Yankees head to St. Petersburg for a three-game series against the Rays.

### **Down on the farm**

Though he was passed over for Wednesday's spot start, the Yankees see encouraging signs from right-hander Deivi Garcia, who has had three consecutive solid outings at Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. The most recent of those came on Tuesday, when Garcia tossed six innings of three-run ball against Rochester.

"He's certainly one of those guys in that mix of guys we considered," Boone said. "It's been a tough start to the year for him, and it's definitely good to see him trending in the right direction and throwing the ball a lot better."

Garcia, 22, is the Yankees' [No. 3 prospect](#) per MLB Pipeline. He is 2-3 with a 6.89 ERA in 13 games (12 starts) at Triple-A and 0-2 with a 6.48 ERA in two big league starts this year.

### **Bombers bits**

- o DJ LeMahieu returned to the Yankees' lineup on Wednesday against the Phillies after missing one game with a stomach virus.

- o Chris Gittens went through an extensive pregame warmup routine to test his right Achilles, which kept him out of Tuesday's lineup. Boone said that he considers Gittens to be

an active player.

### **This date in Yankees history**

July 21, 2006: Alex Rodriguez collected his 2,000th career hit and his 450th home run in the Yankees' 7-3 loss to the Blue Jays at Rogers Centre. Rodriguez's three-run blast came off A.J. Burnett, a future teammate on the 2009 World Series champion Yanks.

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