

Jays in make or break as they take on Orillia in Game 5



By Jeff Doner

Despite winning the first two games in Aurora, the Jays failed to clinch their series against the Majors in Orillia.

By giving up games three and four to tie things up, the home team heads into the deciding game five match in Orillia at press time Tuesday.

Injuries are not the sole reason the Jays find themselves in another must-win situation, but the team has lost a good chunk of its core over the past week.

All-star outfielder and leadoff hitter Stephen Vallee injured his ankle running the bases in game two, catcher Chris Fafalios is back to college in Ohio, and the team was also without hard-hitting outfielder Ryan Lewis and Chris Rettie for games three and four over the weekend.

But Jays second baseman, Ted Beadle wasn't willing to use that as an excuse.

"We've got a pretty deep lineup, so wherever we're missing guys we should have good players stepping in anyways," he said after game two. "We've got a lot of good hitters and players on this team. Everyone will have to pick it up, piece it together and get another win."

The first two games were both low scoring affairs, with both keeping things close right until the end.

Starting pitcher Ian Milne pitched a solid 6.2 innings for the win, with Ian Rettie registering the last two outs to end the game 3 ? 2.

One of the best plays of the game came on a diving catch by Stephen Vallee, who sprinted to make the play at a crucial part of the game in the final frame.

After game one, Milne said he felt his team had taken a big step forward.

"Every year that goes by we get older and more mature and I think we're able to make it through these situations now," he said. "We're playing close games, but we've been finding ways to win, so it's nice to see we can actually hold it together. In past years we normally buckled under that pressure and ended up losing a lot of those games."

Brent Owen, who has been on fire his last two starts, was the story of game two, only needing one run of support in a complete game

shutout.

Ian Gabel was the other game two hero, driving in Ian Rettie in what would be the only run of the game in the third inning.

To end game two, Lewis made a clutch catch in the outfield to keep the tying and winning runs on first and third. Then the Jays infielders turned over a rare double play to end the game in spectacular fashion.

Game two was catcher Fafalios' last game of the season with the Jays before going to school and said he hoped his team would seal the series in game three.

'We lost the first two games against them in the regular season and we put that right behind us and said, 'let's get out there and take care of business.' It was just like in the Clearview series. We took the first two games and that's what we've done again here.'

Little did he know the series would turn into exactly what happened with Clearview.

The Jays went on the road for games three and four on Friday and Saturday.

On Friday, the bats woke up on both teams, but the Jays would be on the losing end of an 11 - 8 slugfest.

Chris Leslie and Ian Rettie shared the mound for the Jays, while shortstop Chris Bloom and Rob Wilson helped pace the offence, scoring five runs between them.

Game four the next day was much of the same for Aurora.

'Saturday was a battle,' said Jays catcher Rob Wilson. 'We knew we would have to dig deep due to some existing player commitments. We struck first with a run in the top of the first, but unfortunately gave them a five-run first inning and a two-run second to give them a 7 - 1 lead.'

Brent Owen came in for relief and kept the Jays in the game, but the game was fairly quiet until the sixth inning when the Jays buried six runs to tie it up. But Orillia bounced back, adding three more runs to hand the Jays a 10 - 7 loss.

'We knew we had a battle ahead of us, but we made it close,' said Wilson after game four. 'The guys dug deep and showed a lot of heart, but ultimately we did ourselves no favours. There were just too many errors. Orillia is a talented young team, but the fact that we made it close, even with having to dig so deep on our roster, bodes well for us.'

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