

Alex Anthopoulos looks back at Blue Jays tenure with pride

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TORONTO – Alex Anthopoulos got used to seeing this over the final two months of last season: the Blue Jays pounding their opponents like they did Thursday night in a [12-2](#) win over the Texas Rangers.

At the time it filled him with joy and satisfaction but now he'd be OK with Toronto losing the next three games, as the architect of the 2015 team that captured the franchise's first postseason berth in 22 years and the hearts and minds of Canadians returned to Rogers Centre on Friday night as a visitor.

Anthopoulos was part of the caravan that rolled through Toronto for the visiting Los Angeles Dodgers – [the organization he now works for](#) in a front office role under the leadership of Andrew Friedman – though the former Blue Jays general manager certainly didn't need a map or a GPS to get around and show off the city.

"It feels great to be back. But I'm still in the city, I still live in the city, so it's not like I haven't been back to Toronto. Basically I've been back and forth. I'm at the home games in L.A.," Anthopoulos said in a pregame press conference with reporters. "Last night I went to dinner with Dave Roberts and Andrew, we were driving – I obviously drove – and they were saying 'what a great place, what a great city,'"

A city with a baseball team that still very much has Anthopoulos' imprints all over it. There are five players on the Blue Jays' current 25-man roster that weren't acquired by Anthopoulos and two of them – J.A. Happ and Jesse Chavez – had played for Toronto earlier in Anthopoulos' tenure.

Even with the 2016 season underway, it's still a little hard to believe that tenure is over, especially given the team's success down the stretch. The dynamic in the organization suddenly changed, however, when Mark Shapiro was announced as the team's new president and Anthopoulos decided the best decision for him was to move on. He's taken on a new challenge with the Dodgers, but that doesn't stop Anthopoulos from being able to look back with perspective and appreciate what he helped build.

"Still being in the city, you see more Blue Jays hats – though I do think I saw a lot last year as well," said Anthopoulos. "I do believe there's a whole new generation of fans based on what happened last year and hopefully it continues. I do believe this place is set up to do unbelievable things.

"The thought was always that it could be what it is today – in terms of attendance, TV ratings, fan interest – the belief was there. It was almost like it was a wick and you needed to light it. That's what I'm most proud of. Seeing where the sport is in Canada right now. Seeing how the organization is viewed and the fan interest."

Anthopoulos won't ever be a complete outsider as a native Canadian and his Blue Jays legacy is in some ways still tied to the fate of this year's team, but his day-to-day priorities now lie firmly with the Dodgers. The job as L.A.'s of vice-president of baseball operations hasn't been without some early adjustments, especially going from the bandbox ballparks in the AL East to the spacious stadiums of the NL West.

"Those first few games we're playing in San Diego and we're playing in L.A. and I don't know how many times balls get hit and I'm waiting for the (home run) horn to go off and it's a flyout to left field or centre." said Anthopoulos.

It's a natural reaction for Anthopoulos, having watched the Blue Jays powerful lineup over these last few years. There's no doubt he'll learn quickly, his successes and failures as a GM have forced him to stay sharp and will continue to serve him here. That's a big reason he's been brought in to work with group that includes Friedman, Farhan Zaidi, and Josh Byrnes.

There was one thing, though, that even his time in Toronto couldn't have prepared him for: those perpetually packed California freeways.

"I jumped out to see a Cal League game, you would think it's a quick drive, but I'm learning about L.A. traffic," said Anthopoulos. "I thought Toronto was bad, but L.A. definitely takes the cake."

And the Dodgers took Anthopoulos once he left the Blue Jays. What no one can take is what he accomplished in Toronto.

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