

# Blue Jays can't secure sweep in oddly contentious loss to Yankees

[ca.sports.yahoo.com/blogs/eh-game/blue-jays-can-t-secure-sweep-in-oddly-contentious-loss-to-yankees-033148820.html](http://ca.sports.yahoo.com/blogs/eh-game/blue-jays-can-t-secure-sweep-in-oddly-contentious-loss-to-yankees-033148820.html)

By Israel Fehr

9/27/2016



TORONTO – A sweep two weeks ago by the Yankees in New York might be what keeps the Blue Jays from winning the division. A sweep of the Yankees in Toronto two weeks later would have been the perfect response for the Blue Jays and helped them solidify their place atop the wild card race.

The Blue Jays were one inning away from securing that sweep but Jason Grilli blew the save in the ninth, allowing four runs, as the Yankees won 7-5 on Monday night in a game that was oddly contentious.

The [benches and bullpens cleared twice](#), first when Toronto starter J.A. Happ hit Chase Headley in the top of the second and then again when New York starter Luis Severino beamed Justin Smoak in the bottom of the inning. The conflict started in the bottom of the first when Severino, making a spot start for injured ace Masahiro Tanaka, plunked Josh Donaldson.

The second meeting on the field was when tempers really flared. Blue Jays reliever Joaquin Benoit injured his calf in the scrum and limped off the field and toward the clubhouse. Yankees manager Joe Girardi was tossed after the first melee and bench coach Rob Thomson, pitching coach Larry Rothschild, and Severino were gone after the second.

"We got an intense ballgame, two teams trying to get into the playoffs, and that's baseball, that's what happens," said Happ. "Your focus is still there. It took a little bit of time but other than that you have to focus back in and execute."

Happ avoided ejection, much to Girardi's dismay, and ended up going 7 1/3 innings and allowing two runs. The left-hander looked to be on his way to his 21st win of the season.

However, Grilli, pitching the ninth as closer Roberto Osuna received a day off, took the loss after being charged with four earned runs and giving up two homers. The Blue Jays scored two runs in the bottom of the ninth after Dellin Betances loaded the bases but still came up two runs short as they left them loaded.

"We're going to come back tomorrow ready to go. It was a tough ballgame the whole night. They end up getting us, we came back, we almost had a great comeback. We were just one hit short," said Happ. "We got three out of four. We wanted to get four out of four but we'll come back and be ready to face Baltimore tomorrow."

It's a game, and a series, that could alter the look of the AL wild-card standings. The Blue Jays have yet to clinch a playoff spot and still have work to do lock down home-field advantage in the wild-card game. The Orioles are in the second wild-card spot, a game back of Toronto entering their three-game series that begins Tuesday, while the Tigers are two games behind Baltimore. The Red Sox have reeled off 11 wins in a row and need one more to claim the AL East title, which could happen before this upcoming weekend's series with the Blue Jays in Boston. So the division is out of reach but Toronto still has a lot to play for in the final week of the season.

These Blue Jays aren't as dynamic, and therefore aren't as feared, as they were at this time last year. But we've seen in baseball, time and time again, that it's getting into the postseason that counts. What happens from there is close to impossible to predict. The St. Louis Cardinals won 105 games in 2004 and were swept in the World Series. They won 100 games in 2005 and lost in the NLCS. 2006? 83 wins and a World Series title.

Outlier? Maybe. But it's getting there that counts.

The Indians feel vulnerable after the recent injuries to key starters Carlos Carrasco and Danny Salazar. The Rangers have won a historic number of one-run games, a result that is believed to have more to do with luck than skill over a representative sample size. The Red Sox have the league's best offence, much like Toronto did in 2015, but there's still a feeling of uneasiness with their pitching.

What sets those three teams apart from the Blue Jays right now, though, is that they're already there. Toronto was almost a win closer to joining them but now they're one loss to being tied with the Orioles for the wild card. Getting home field in that game, and getting there at all, is what's at stake in these next three games.

-----

**Israel Fehr** is a writer for [Yahoo Canada Sports](#). Email him at [israelfehr@yahoo.ca](mailto:israelfehr@yahoo.ca) or follow him on Twitter. [Follow @israelfehr](#)