

Blue Jays couldn't wait on Brett Lawrie any longer, improve at third base with Josh Donaldson trade

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By Israel Fehr

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It seemed like a perfect fit. A hard-working, energetic, and exciting Canadian kid with all the tools to thrive at the major-league level set to take on a starring role for the Toronto Blue Jays.

Unfortunately for the Blue Jays and Brett Lawrie, nothing over the last three seasons came close to approaching the heights of the super six-week cameo to begin his big-league career toward the tail end of 2011.

Injury woes and inconsistent play have hindered Lawrie from becoming a star, and ultimately led Toronto to [trade](#) the talented but troubled soon-to-be 25-year-old, along with pitchers Kendall Graveman and Sean Nolin, and shortstop Franklin Barreto, to the Oakland Athletics in exchange for third baseman Josh Donaldson on Friday night.

Donaldson, 28, gives the Jays an instant upgrade at third base. In two years as a full-time starter in Oakland, Donaldson has hit .277/.363/.477 with 53 home runs and even challenges Lawrie's strong defensive skills. Only Angels outfielder Mike Trout and Pirates outfielder Andrew McCutchen have a better [fWAR](#) than Donaldson's 14.1 since 2013. He's also under team control through 2018.

"A very good defensive player, gamer, hard-nosed, durable. An intense guy, wants to win and a guy that can hit in the middle of our order. He's going to fit well with [Edwin] Encarnacion and [Jose] Bautista," is how Blue Jays general manager Alex Anthopoulos described Donaldson.

The plan was for Lawrie to be that guy, but the injuries continued to pile up and even when he was healthy he struggled for long stretches of time at the plate. It wasn't working and the Blue Jays are built to win now. Donaldson is here to help push the team to the playoffs because Lawrie couldn't be counted on to contribute consistently.

"I think Brett is a very, very good player and he can get even better. He's a Gold Glove calibre defender at third, he energizes his teammates, he plays hard, he plays to win. I think the expectations on him were so high because of his six-week period when he came up the first time," said Anthopoulos.

"Brett is young in so many ways, from a baseball standpoint and a development standpoint. He was so talented that he got up here so early, he still has to go out and do it on the field but he's already an outstanding player and he absolutely has the ability to take it to another level and become the all-star. I don't think the book is closed on him at all and I wouldn't be surprised if that happens soon. Sad to see him go, but I told him, certainly the organization, everybody appreciated the way he plays. It was hard for him and hard for us to see him go."

Oakland might be the place for Lawrie to blossom as a player. He can get away from the added attention of being a Canadian playing for Canada's lone major-league franchise.

The Blue Jays still have more holes to fill this offseason, but they went out and paid a price to get Donaldson to do what they had envisioned Lawrie would do in Toronto over the course of a long and productive career. They simply couldn't wait any longer.

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