

# Blue Jays struggle to hit Justin Verlander, their biggest concern of the day in loss to Tigers

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By Israel Fehr

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TORONTO – Going into Thursday's series finale against the Tigers, the Blue Jays had every reason to be fired up.

Outside noise swirled around [Colby Rasmus' take-out slide from the night before](#). Even louder noise surrounded [J.P. Arencibia's radio rip-job](#) of Sportsnet analysts Gregg Zaun and Dirk Hayhurst. The starter for Detroit, [Justin Verlander](#), was returning to the Rogers Centre mound for the [first time since his no-hitter](#) against Toronto in May 2011.

All of this and the Blue Jays were flat. An [11-1 loss](#) without a singular point of failure.

"Tonight, we didn't play good baseball. Plain and simple," said manager John Gibbons.

It's proof that emotionally-charged narratives are nothing more than fruitless fodder for fans and media. Fun and engaging, yes, but carrying little tangible impact on any given game.

Rather, the starting pitcher sets the tone for the game. [Esmil Rogers](#) gave up four runs on six hits and a walk in the first three innings. Verlander retired the first 11 batters he faced and cruised to seven innings of shutout-ball allowing just three hits and striking out five.

An ace on his game. There's no better way to stake your claim to victory in the sport.

"Verlander's not going to give you much. Even when he's not on he's not going to give you much," said Gibbons.

"Obviously he's got four pitches he can throw at any time. You just try and get a good pitch to hit," said Arencibia. "Especially when they get a bigger lead he's going to throw strike one and do whatever he wants from there, that's what makes it a little bit tougher."

Conversely, when a starter isn't sharp it puts a team in the unwelcome position of being down early and Rogers acknowledged he didn't have his best stuff.

"In the bullpen, I felt my sinker isn't working today," Rogers said.

"If you're behind in the count and leaving balls up, people are going to hurt you. If we're not throwing fastballs for strikes they don't have to honour it as much," said Arencibia.

Baseball is a fickle game and the major-league season is a long one. Stories like the ones surrounding Rasmus and Arencibia are bound to show up, but in essence they're just like a fireworks show. Each one is loud and colourful for a few seconds, but after that they leave the night sky barren and it's swiftly onto the next batch, regardless of how exciting the previous one was.

Justin Verlander was on his game. Trying to beat a big-time pitcher is tough and unlike the Rasmus and Arencibia narratives, that's a problem that won't go away.

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