

# Firing John Gibbons would be short-sighted decision by Blue Jays

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By Israel Fehr

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TORONTO – Monday night's game at home against the New York Yankees was really no different than every game this season for Blue Jays manager John Gibbons, with the notable exception of an event that hasn't be so common for Toronto in 2013. Just like every other game, Gibbons put on his uniform, set his lineup, talked to the media, and just before first pitch, settled into his spot on the bench to watch the action.

The one distinction is that on this particular Monday night, he sat comfortably in the Blue Jays' dugout and watched [R.A. Dickey](#) throw 6 1/3 innings, giving up two runs, only one of them earned, and striking out six in a [5-2 win](#) over the Yankees.

"He was really good. He gave us just what we needed," said Gibbons. "He was brought here to win games, that's all that matters."

"It's always nice to perform well in this stadium, in particular against a team as good as New York," said Dickey.

If that had been the case more often this season, demands for Gibbons' dismissal would be non-existent. Of course, being a major league manager is a results based business and Toronto's on-field results have warranted a reason to find a solution.

Before Monday's game, Damien Cox of the [Toronto Star](#) and Dirk Hayhurst of [Sportsnet.ca](#) both penned columns calling for Gibbons to be fired, serving as confirmation that it is in fact late August in a city where the local baseball

team has woefully failed to live up to off-season expectations.

There's one sentiment that Cox and Hayhurst share - it's that Gibbons failed to create a winning culture with the Blue Jays this season.

*Cox: Nobody could fairly blame Gibbons for all that has gone wrong; at the same time, he's hardly come in and re-set the table or established a new winning culture.*

*Hayhurst: Whether [John] Farrell and [Joe] Maddon are baseball geniuses, masters of overseeing player development, or just the beneficiaries of great players given to them, the one thing they have both created is a winning culture, something Gibbons has not done.*

Cox and Hayhurst are certainly entitled to their opinions, although it is curious that Farrell's ability to summon a winning culture, something he absolutely didn't accomplish over two years as the manager in Toronto, coincides with the Red Sox starters having a 3.82 ERA, good for 10th in MLB.

Blue Jays starters have combined for a 5.06 ERA this season, a level of futility exceeded only by the Twins' 5.11 team ERA.

Not too far from the Jays are the once-mighty San Francisco Giants, the same team that's won two of the last three World Series. This year San Francisco is in last place in the NL West with a similar record to Toronto. Their starting pitching ERA is 4.48, 6th worst in baseball; Last season, their collective ERA of 3.73 was 6th best.

So what changed in San Francisco? Was the winning culture established by manager Bruce Bochy run over by the World Series celebration parade float? If so, it must not have happened on the main parade route because news of the tragic accident went unreported.

A winning culture is only as good as the players on the field.

Firing Gibbons would be incredibly short-sighted. It would be an emotional decision and sharp deviation from the plan and vision devised by general manager Alex Anthopoulos and the Blue Jays front office this offseason.

Anthopoulos showed his commitment to Gibbons as his manager going forward by negotiating a contract that ensures that Gibbons would never be in position of [only having one year left](#) on his deal.

There's only so much a baseball manager can control over the course of a game and Gibbons is generally [well-regarded in the sabermetric community](#) because of his logical bullpen management and progressive lineup construction, like [batting Jose Bautista second](#) for a good part of the season, and his understanding platoon splits. How much blame does he deserve for an under-performing starting rotation?

It's easy to fire the manager, especially when not being the one tasked to find the new lineup-card writing, bullpen-managing, ballplayer-motivating saviour.

There's no denying that the results for the Jays have been disappointing, and admittedly the failure does extend beyond simply poor starting pitching. The position player depth was not sufficient, and for a second consecutive season the team was hit hard by injuries, possibly showing an organizational problem as far as strength and conditioning methods.

Gibbons may be sacrificed to appease a wounded fan base. A second chance that didn't go his way. Baseball can be cruel that way.

The Blue Jays excited their fan base with promises of a grand future and Gibbons was selected to be a part of that future. It's about buying into process over results. Now that's how you establish a winning culture.

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