

Controversial call indicative of Blue Jays' Game 2 loss, it was a matter of inches

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By Israel Fehr

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TORONTO – The difference in the game was inches. The difference in the series is now immense.

Rougned Odor scored the winning run with two outs in the top of the 14th inning for the Texas Rangers, as they beat the Toronto Blue Jays [6-4 on Friday](#) to take a decisive 2-0 lead in the ALDS. Moments earlier, Odor had nearly been thrown out running the bases. Jose Bautista threw a dart to Troy Tulowitzki as Odor aggressively rounded second on a Chris Gimenez single to right field. Odor dove back into the bag as Tulowitzki applied the tag, and the ruling on the field was that Odor was safe.

But did he drift off the bag? It sure was close. The play was reviewed. As the replay played over and over again in slow motion on the videoboard that hangs over center field, the fans we're sure of it: Odor was out. His right foot had indeed slipped off the base. They let the umpires know the decision should be reversed.

The feeling returned in the stadium that everything would be all right. The Blue Jays' bats would get yet another opportunity to walk the game off. The Rangers would regret giving them so many chances. The thoughts of having to overcome a 0-2 deficit vanished from their minds.



However, after about two minutes, the call was confirmed, and the stadium exploded in a chorus of boos. Moments later, Odor came around as the go-ahead run after Hanser Alberto singled to center field and sent the World Series favorites to the brink of elimination. Inches: the difference between the inning being over and a runner being in scoring position in extra innings.

"It's really hard to tell (what happened) in the play at second base," said Blue Jays manager John Gibbons. "From what we saw on the board it looked like there might have been a little gap. Whether there was enough to overturn it? Apparently not. That's the way it goes."

Bautista wasn't quite ready to let it go, though.

"I would like to hear an answer from the replay booth in New York on why they made that decision," said an emotional Bautista. "I know that's not part of the protocol, and it seems pretty convenient that it's not. Will we ever get an answer? Will our fans ever get an answer? I don't know. Maybe you should ask the people that are in charge."

It's far from the only call that will be questioned. The home team certainly took issue with home-plate umpire Vic Carapazza's strike zone. Seven times they struck out looking.

"Hitting's extremely difficult as is. When the plate starts expanding it makes it even more difficult," said center fielder Kevin Pillar.

Russell Martin took it a step further: "If that was a regular-season game, I'm pretty sure there's a pretty good chance

I'm getting thrown out of that game."

But through all the complaints – even if they were in many ways valid – the Blue Jays can also take accountability for a couple of costly miscues in the field. Delino DeShields led off the first inning with a line drive to right field. Bautista crashed into the wall, trying to make a great catch, but couldn't hold onto the ball, allowing DeShields to reach second. That led to a run. An error by catcher Russell Martin on a throw down to Josh Donaldson at third allowed Shin-Soo Choo to score from third and led to another. In a game decided in extras, those early runs loomed especially large.

Some of their Game 2 misery also had more to do with bad luck than anything else. With the Blue Jays up 4-3 in the fifth, Bautista missed a two-run home run to left field by a few feet. With the score tied in the 13th, Donaldson did the same, his towering shot hooking just wide of the foul pole. There was some jawing between Donaldson and Rangers reliever Keone Kela and the benches cleared before order was quickly restored. Still in the 13th, Edwin Encarnacion smashed a ball to center that was caught at the warning track to end the inning.

Three potentially game-changing swings, all came up inches short.

"We had plenty of chances," said Bautista. "They made good pitches. They got us out. We've just got to get it done with men on base and we've got to shore up our defense. We made a few errors in those first two games, which is not typical for us ... Have they been the easiest games to play? Perhaps not. But we could have won if we played better."

The toughest part to stomach is that even a steady Marcus Stroman start wasn't enough to get it done for the Blue Jays. Stroman went seven innings in his postseason debut, giving up four runs, three of them earned.

"It won't be easy, they've got a great team over there," Gibbons said of winning both games in Texas and bringing the series back to Toronto for Game 5 on Wednesday. "They outplayed us both games."

And now the big bad Blue Jays are in a big hole. They must win three straight games, two of them on the road, to stay alive in these playoffs. They'll need to be at their best to pull it off. So far through two games, they haven't been nearly good enough.

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