

# No time for Blue Jays to search for answers down 0-3 in ALCS

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TORONTO – The best the Blue Jays could come up with was that at least they have another game to play.

What else can you say when you've scored three runs in three games and are facing a deficit only one team in the history of baseball has erased. Toronto lost Game 3 of the ALCS 4-2 on Monday night, going down 0-3 in the series, this latest loss the most frustrating of the three because of the circumstances of how the game played out.

No, no real complaints about the umpiring here, but rather the presentation of a dream scenario that turned out to be anything but.

Cleveland's starter Trevor Bauer had no choice but to leave the game in the first inning after recording just two outs as the blood gushing from the pinky he sliced servicing his drone would not relent.

Cleveland's bullpen was identified as the team's biggest strength heading into the series, but to record 25 outs in a nine-inning game is a tough ask for crew of relief pitchers. Six relievers made the trot from the bullpen in right field at Rogers Centre to the mound, starting with Dan Otero in the first and ending with Andrew Miller in the eighth. Otero was on the hook for one run, a solo shot by Michael Saunders in the second, and Zach McAllister allowed the other run in the fifth.

"There's really no excuses. All those guys, I think everyone has seen before," said Blue Jays catcher Russell Martin. "On any given day, if you ask anybody if you want to face someone's bullpen over a starter, that's what you normally battle to get to. You try to get the starter's pitch count up so you can finally get to that bullpen.

"Today was a bullpen day for them, and they came through."

Their lead in the series is now commanding, but by no means has Cleveland dominated the Blue Jays. They won Game 1 by two runs, Game 2 by one run and Game 3 by two runs. John Gibbons tinkered with his team's lineup, moving Jose Bautista up to the leadoff spot in an attempt to spark the offense. That didn't work, either, leaving the Jays even more befuddled than before.

"If we knew we would be doing it. It's baseball. It's a tough sport. We haven't been able to come up with the big hit. It's that simple," said center fielder Kevin Pillar. "They're sitting over there with the 3-0 lead because they are getting the timely hits. It's been very competitive, all three games, they just seem to be coming up with the big hit when they need it."



In this game it was Mike Napoli who was the main man for Cleveland, coming up with an RBI double, a home run, and scoring on an RBI single from Jose Ramirez. Jason Kipnis also had a homer.

Josh Donaldson came closest to delivering that elusive dagger for Toronto, driving a ball to left field with runners at first and second that soared a tad too hard, a tad too long and landed in a sliding Coco Crisp's glove.

The Blue Jays entered the ALCS having won six straight – the last two regular season games, the wild-card game against Baltimore, and a three-game ALDS sweep of Texas – and their offense was riding high. Credit Cleveland's pitchers for slowing them down, but even then this kind of silence is hard to stomach.

Last season the Blue Jays ran hot and cold for four months before catching fire. This year they seemed to find a more consistent balance, but they didn't inspire the same confidence on the positive extreme. Unless they can find that sweet spot soon, three days ago would have been nice, their year will end at the same point it did in 2015.

Cleveland manager Terry Francona indicated earlier Monday is that if Bauer didn't get deep into the game that Corey Kluber would start Game 4 on short rest. Kluber's never done it before in his career, but why not give it a shot? Everything else has gone Cleveland's way so far in the series.

So that's where the Jays find themselves, facing a Cy Young award winner to extend their season and needing three more wins without a loss to achieve their goal of reaching the World Series.

"Nothing much really surprises in this game. I was definitely expecting to score some more runs," said Martin. "Maybe we're saving it for Games 4, 5, 6 and 7. I hope so. We've got another one tomorrow. It's not over."

Not over yet. That's really all the Blue Jays can say. There's no time to search for answers. All they can do is play.

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