



## Not so rusty Spear delivers Essendon's sixth in a row

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He's pitched some incredible games over the course of his career but Sunday's Game 3 effort from **Russ Spear** might have just been his finest. The crafty veteran throwing a complete game shutout against the league's most potent offence to give Essendon an unparalleled sixth consecutive Division 1 Championship.

With the Series on the line both teams had it all to play for: Melbourne in search of their first Division 1 Summer Championship and Essendon with a historic sixth consecutive Premiership up for grabs.

After his five-inning relief effort in Game 1, Essendon elected to go back to the veteran **Russell Spear** while Melbourne put their faith in 26-year-old **Liam Davine** with both pitchers keeping their respective sides in the contest despite numerous scoring opportunities.

Davine settled after **Josh Davies** singled home **Scott McIntyre** to open the game's scoring but it will be Melbourne who will be left to rue missed opportunities.

With no outs and runners at second and third in the fourth inning, Spears weaved his first piece of magic, inducing a ground ball from **Alex Hondromatidis** to leave the runners stranded. An intentional walk to the dangerous **Matt Kent** would give Essendon a chance to escape the jam with a double play ball but they wouldn't need it, Spears inducing another grounder, this time from **Oliver McMahon** allowing the lead runner to be cut down at the plate. A fly ball to centre ended the scoring threat but it wasn't to be Melbourne's last opportunity...

The fifth inning saw Melbourne have runners at first and second with none out, spear again using every trick in the book to bail the Bombers out without any damage to the scoreboard.

Essendon failed to convert their own chance in the home half of the fifth when **Tim Sullivan** was left stranded at third after a lead-off double.

Melbourne were back at it in the eighth, leaving them loaded as **Russ Spears** struck out **Oliver McMahon** to end the threat in an epic battle between the two.

Spear went back out for the ninth inning, quashing any chance of a Melbourne comeback with a quick 1-2-3 ninth. The wily veteran unbelievable in an afternoon that included 141 pitches over nine innings, allowing just five hits while striking out 10.

It was no surprise when **Russ Spear's** name was called as the Series MVP after 13 innings of scoreless pitching across appearances in Games 1 and 3.

Essendon now lift the prestigious **Ross Straw Trophy** for an incredible sixth year in a row, a monster effort from a powerhouse baseball club.

### FULL GAME STATISTICS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	R	H	E
<b>Melbourne Demons</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1
<b>Essendon Bombers</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	1	6	1