

= 2009 American League Central tie @-@ breaker game =

The 2009 American League Central tie @-@ breaker game was a one @-@ game extension to Major League Baseball 's (MLB) 2009 regular season , played between the Detroit Tigers and Minnesota Twins to determine the champion of the American League 's (AL) Central Division . It was played at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome in Minneapolis , Minnesota , on October 6 , 2009 . The Twins won the game 6 ? 5 in extra innings and advanced to the 2009 AL Division Series where they were swept by the New York Yankees ; the Tigers failed to qualify for the postseason .

A tie @-@ breaker was necessary after both teams finished the season with identical win ? loss records of 86 ? 76 . The Twins , who had won the regular season series against the Tigers , 11 games to 7 , were thus awarded home field due to a rules change prior to the 2009 season . It was the third tie @-@ breaker played in MLB from 2007 ? 2009 . It was also the second consecutive tiebreaker for the AL Central title after 2008 , when the Chicago White Sox defeated the Twins to win the division . In baseball statistics tie @-@ breakers are counted as the 163rd regular season game played by both teams and all events in the game are added to regular season statistics . This was the Twins ' final regular season game at the Metrodome as the team moved to Target Field for the 2010 season . The tie @-@ breaker was later named the Best Regular @-@ Season Game of the Decade by Sports Illustrated .

= = Background = =

The Tigers led the AL Central for periods at the start of the season in April , ultimately tying for the lead on May 10 and taking the lead outright on May 16 . The Tigers held at least a share of the divisional lead from then onwards , holding their largest lead of 7 games on September 6 . Although the Tigers went 16 ? 12 in September , their second @-@ best month by winning percentage in 2009 , they won just 1 of 4 games in October . The Twins went 16 ? 11 and 4 ? 0 , respectively , over this same stretch to tie the Tigers for the divisional lead after the 162 @-@ game regular season . More broadly , the Tigers were 48 ? 39 over the first half of the season while the Twins were 45 ? 44 but the Twins came back in the second half going 41 ? 32 leading up to the tie @-@ breaker while the Tigers went 38 ? 37 over the same span . The Twins won 11 of the two team 's 18 match @-@ ups that season prior to the tie @-@ breaker .

This late season competition for the AL Central title included a 4 @-@ game series between the two teams from September 29 to October 2 . The series , played at the Tigers ' home field Comerica Park , started with a day @-@ night doubleheader caused by a rainout the night before when the series was scheduled to start . The final game of the series featured moments of contention between the two teams . In the third inning , Nate Robertson hit Denard Span . Minnesota starter Scott Baker hit Marcus Thames with a pitch the next inning . Thames responded by sliding hard into second base to break up a potential double play that inning . Twins ' reliever Jose Mijares then threw behind the Tigers ' Adam Everett in the eighth inning . Umpire Angel Hernandez warned Mijares and the Tigers bench , Tigers ' manager Jim Leyland argued with Hernandez , and he was ejected . Despite the warning Minnesota 's Delmon Young was hit in the knee with the first pitch in the ninth inning by Jeremy Bonderman . Bonderman was immediately ejected as was Tigers ' catcher Gerald Laird who argued with Hernandez and the benches cleared , though there was no brawl . Bonderman was suspended for three games , and Tigers ' hitting coach Lloyd McClendon ? who had been acting as manager following Leyland 's ejection ? was suspended for a game . McClendon , Leyland , and Laird were all fined .

Ultimately , the four @-@ game series was split with two wins for each team , and the Tigers maintained a two @-@ game lead with only three games remaining for each club . The Tigers lost two of their next three games to the Chicago White Sox , whereas the Twins swept the Kansas City Royals in a three @-@ game set leaving both teams tied with an 86 ? 76 record . A one @-@ game playoff would decide the winner of the Central division while the loser would be eliminated from playoff contention . Prior to the 2009 season , home field advantage in a tiebreaker game was decided by a series of coin tosses held towards the end of the regular season that would decide the

home teams of all possible one @-@ game playoffs . A rule change following the 2008 season altered this process , leaving the site determined on a series of performance @-@ based criteria beginning with the head @-@ to @-@ head record between the two teams that were tied . Therefore , the Twins took home @-@ field advantage in this game , by virtue of winning the season series against the Tigers 11 ? 7 . The game was the third MLB tie @-@ breaker in three seasons , a record number for the league .

While October 5 had been the original scheduled date for a potential tiebreaker game , a conflict with a Monday Night Football game between the Green Bay Packers and Minnesota Vikings being played at the Metrodome that night led to the baseball game being moved to the following day .

= = Game summary = =

Box score for Tuesday , October 6 , 2009 ? 4 : 08 p.m. (CT) at Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome in Minneapolis , Minnesota

The game was scoreless through the first two innings . Detroit took a three @-@ run lead in the third inning which started when Curtis Granderson walked , advanced on a ground out , and scored on a single by Magglio Ordóñez to center field . Ordóñez was then brought home via a two @-@ run home run by Tigers ' first baseman Miguel Cabrera . The Twins responded in the bottom of the inning , with Matt Tolbert singling to lead off the inning , advancing to second base on a single by Denard Span , and then moving to third on a flyball out . Tigers ' starter Rick Porcello attempted a pickoff throw to first which hit the baserunner Span and went past the first baseman Cabrera . Span was out but Tolbert was able to score on Porcello 's throwing error .

The score remained 3 ? 1 until the bottom of the 6th inning . Porcello got the first two batters of the inning out but then allowed a solo home run to Jason Kubel to bring the game within one run . Porcello then walked the next batter , Michael Cuddyer , and was relieved by Zach Miner . The Twins loaded the bases against Miner , but did not score again in the inning . Scott Baker , the Twins ' starter , walked the first batter of the 7th and was relieved by Jon Rauch though no runs scored . The Twins took a 4 ? 3 lead in the bottom of the 7th with a leadoff single by Nick Punto and a two @-@ run home run by Orlando Cabrera . The Tigers responded , tying the game at 4 with a home run by Ordóñez in the top of the 8th off of Matt Guerrier . Guerrier allowed another two walks in the inning and was relieved by closer Joe Nathan who escaped the inning with no further scoring .

Nathan remained in the game , holding the Tigers scoreless in the 9th , while Tigers ' closer Fernando Rodney did the same to Minnesota to force extra innings . Jesse Crain replaced Nathan in the top of the 10th and hit Aubrey Huff who was pinch hitting for Wilkin Ramirez . Don Kelly then pinch ran for Huff , and scored on a double by Brandon Inge to give the Tigers a 5 ? 4 lead . The Tigers inserted Clete Thomas for Ordóñez in right field as a defensive replacement in the bottom of the 10th . However the Twins retied the game at 5 ? 5 as Cuddyer led off the inning with a triple and , following a Delmon Young groundout and a walk to Brendan Harris , scored on a single by Tolbert . Alexi Casilla pinch @-@ ran for Harris and advanced to third on Tolbert 's single . Nick Punto then hit a fly ball to left @-@ fielder Ryan Raburn . Casilla attempted to score on the play , but inadvertently inched off the base before the ball was caught , and had to return to the base before breaking for home . Catcher Gerald Laird successfully tagged out Casilla to complete the inning @-@ ending double play .

Both teams were held scoreless in the 11th . The Tigers threatened to score in the top of the 12th , with a walk by Cabrera and a single by Kelly with one out . Twins pitcher Bobby Keppel then intentionally walked Raburn to load the bases , hoping he could induce a double play . Then , Keppel threw a fastball close to batter Brandon Inge with his first pitch . Inge believed he was hit by the ball and should advance to first , which would force a go @-@ ahead run to score with the bases loaded , but home plate umpire Randy Marsh ruled the pitch did not hit Inge and allowed the at @-@ bat to continue . Tigers ' manager Jim Leyland would say later that " the replay kind of confirms that it did hit him , " but Marsh maintained that replays were " inconclusive . " Inge ultimately grounded into a force out at home and Laird would strikeout to close the top of the inning

with no scoring . Carlos Gómez led off the bottom of the 12th with a single for the Twins and advanced to second on a ground @-@ out . With first base open , the Tigers intentionally walked Delmon Young to bring up Casilla . Casilla atoned for his earlier base @-@ running blunder by hitting a ground ball through the right side of the infield . The base hit allowed the speedy Gomez to score from second without a play , thus giving the Twins a 6 ? 5 walk @-@ off victory .

= = Aftermath = =

The tie @-@ breaker win clinched the American League Central for the Twins and earned them a spot in the 2009 AL Division Series (ALDS) against the New York Yankees . They were swept , losing the ALDS in three games . The Tigers became the first team in MLB history to have a three @-@ game division lead with four games remaining and lose the division . MLB tie @-@ breaker games count as regular season games and this game affected certain statistical races for the 2009 season . For example , Jason Beck of MLB.com noted that if the umpire agreed with Brandon Inge on the contentious 12th inning call Inge would have tied for the most hit by a pitch in the American League . Twins ' catcher Joe Mauer won the 2009 American League batting title , and his final batting average for the season moved from .364 to .365 in the game .

The game was later chosen by Sports Illustrated as the Best Regular @-@ Season Game of the Decade .