

= 1951 National League tie @-@ breaker series =

The 1951 National League tie @-@ breaker series was a best @-@ of @-@ three playoff series at the conclusion of Major League Baseball 's (MLB) 1951 regular season to decide the winner of the National League (NL) pennant . The games were played on October 1 , 2 , and 3 , 1951 , between the New York Giants and Brooklyn Dodgers . It was necessary after both teams finished the season with identical win ? loss records of 96 ? 58 . It is most famous for the walk @-@ off home run hit by Bobby Thomson of the Giants in the deciding game , which has come to be known as baseball 's " Shot Heard ' Round the World " .

This was the second three @-@ game playoff in NL history . After no tiebreakers had been needed since the American League (AL) became a major league in 1901 , this was the third such tie in the previous six seasons . The Dodgers had been involved in the previous one as well , losing to the St. Louis Cardinals during the 1946 season in two straight games . In addition to the 1946 series , the AL had a one @-@ game playoff in 1948 .

The Giants won game one , while the Dodgers came back to win game two . After trailing for most of game three , the Giants rallied to win the game and the series . Consequently , they advanced to the 1951 World Series , in which they were defeated by the New York Yankees . In baseball statistics , the tie @-@ breaker series counted as the 155th , 156th , and 157th regular season games by both teams ; all events in the games were added to regular season statistics .

= = Background = =

Sportswriters projected that the Giants , Dodgers , and Philadelphia Phillies would face off during the 1951 Major League Baseball season . The previous season , the Phillies won the NL pennant with a 91 ? 63 record , while the Dodgers and Giants finished in second and third place , two and five games behind the Phillies , respectively . In the annual Associated Press poll , Brooklyn was projected as the favorite to win the pennant with 1 @,@ 413 points , New York was second with 1 @,@ 281 , and Philadelphia was third with 1 @,@ 176 . The United Press , however , had New York winning the pennant ; they had 81 votes compared to 55 for Brooklyn and 18 for Philadelphia .

Throughout the first half of the season , the Dodgers stayed in first place by a large margin . By August 10 , they were 12 1 ? 2 games ahead of the Giants and 14 1 ? 2 games ahead of the Phillies , and as a result they were already looking ahead to facing the New York Yankees in the 1951 World Series ; the Associated Press commented on their dominance , saying that " unless they completely fold in their last 50 games , they 're in . " While the Phillies fell out of contention , the Giants won 16 consecutive games from August 12 to August 27 , cutting their deficit from 12 1 ? 2 games to six .

By September 20 , the Dodgers had ten games left to play while the Giants had seven , and the Dodgers had a 4 1 ? 2 game advantage , making a pennant win appear imminent . However , the Giants won their last seven games , and the Dodgers needed to defeat the Phillies in the final game of the season to force a playoff ; they did so by winning 9 ? 8 in 14 innings , leaving both teams with a record of 96 ? 58 .

The National League used a three @-@ game playoff (prior to 1969) to break a tie for the pennant , the winner of which would face the American League champion Yankees in the 1951 World Series . The Dodgers won the coin toss for home field advantage , but opted to host game one at Ebbets Field on October 1 , while the Giants would as a result get to host games two and three at the Polo Grounds on October 2 and 3 . The Dodgers chose Ralph Branca , who also started the first game of the 1946 tiebreaker , to start game one because he had beaten the Giants twice in the regular season , while the Giants chose Jim Hearn , who had beaten the Dodgers twice that year .

= = Game 1 summary = =

Branca began the game by retiring the first three batters ; Eddie Stanky and Alvin Dark flied out while Don Mueller grounded out . In the bottom of the first , Carl Furillo grounded out , and Pee Wee

Reese hit a single . After Duke Snider flied out , Reese was caught stealing second base to end the inning . In the second inning , Branca retired all three hitters ; when the Dodgers came up to bat , Jackie Robinson flied out and Roy Campanella grounded out . Andy Pafko scored the game 's first run with a home run to left field to make the score 1 ? 0 . After the third out , Willie Mays walked to start the third inning , and after the first out Stanky got the Giants ' first hit , a single . After a fly out by Dark , the Giants remained without a run ; Hearn retired all three batters in the bottom of the third to end the inning .

In the fourth inning , Monte Irvin was hit by a pitch between outs by Mueller and Whitey Lockman . Bobby Thomson then hit a home run to put the Giants up , 2 ? 1 . After the third out , the Dodgers came back to the plate . Reese grounded out , but Snider and Robinson hit back @-@ to @-@ back singles . Campanella grounded into a double play to end the inning . The Giants got one man on base in the top of the fifth inning , when Stanky singled with two outs . Pafko reached on an error to start off the bottom of the fifth , but was caught stealing second base ; Gil Hodges and Branca both struck out to end the fifth . The only hit in the sixth inning was a single by Lockman , and the two teams entered the seventh inning with the score still 2 ? 1 .

There were no hits in the seventh inning , as both pitchers retired the first three batters they faced . In the top of the eighth inning , Irvin hit the third home run of the game , his 24th of the year , to make the score 3 ? 1 . Lockman then reached first base on an error and was able to advance to third base , but Mays and Hearn both struck out to keep the score intact . No Dodgers managed a hit in the bottom of the eighth , though the Dodgers brought in Jim Russell to use as a pinch hitter for Branca . In the ninth inning , Alvin Dark doubled for the Giants , but he was the only player on either team to earn a hit ; Hearn retired all three Dodgers hitters to end the game with the 3 ? 1 victory , earning a complete game win after allowing five hits to the Dodgers . Those in attendance included Bill Dickey , a coach for the Yankees who attended the game to scout both teams .

= = Game 2 summary = =

The series moved to the Polo Grounds for game two . Sheldon Jones took the mound for the Giants despite a 6 ? 10 record going into the game , allowing the Giants to save Sal Maglie for the series ' game three or the first game of the World Series . The Dodgers used Clem Labine , a rookie who had started just six games for the Dodgers in his career , because they lacked pitchers who were ready for the game . The Yankees were among those in attendance as spectators .

Pee Wee Reese singled and Jackie Robinson homered , scoring two runs for the Dodgers in the first inning ; the Giants had one player reach base on an error , making the score 2 ? 0 after one inning . In the second inning , Gil Hodges singled and reached third base on an error , allowing the Dodgers to potentially score again . After Rube Walker 's hit the Giants threw Hodges out at home plate , and two further outs ended their turn at bat . The Giants had two consecutive hits in their half , a double hit by Thomson and a single hit by Mays , but they failed to score as well after two groundouts , leaving the score 2 ? 0 . After one out , Duke Snider walked and Robinson singled to start the third inning , and Jones was removed from pitching duties , replaced by George Spencer .

Spencer ended the inning by throwing Snider out at home to keep the score 2 ? 0 . Eddie Stanky reached base after a Dodgers error , marking the second error for both teams ; after another hit , the inning ended with a strikeout by Thomson . In the fourth inning , three players hit singles but did not score . Snider doubled in the fifth inning with one out , and a Jackie Robinson single made the score 3 ? 0 for the Dodgers . The inning ended for the Dodgers on a double play , and Don Mueller hit a single in the bottom of the fifth before the Giants recorded three straight outs . The Dodgers opened up the game in the sixth inning , as Hodges led off with a home run . Billy Cox then reached base on an error and scored on a second error to make the game 5 ? 0 . After Labine walked to get on base , there was a rain delay , and play did not resume until that night .

After the game resumed , Labine scored on back @-@ to @-@ back singles by Reese and Snider . The Giants then came up to bat , failing to earn a hit as the score became 6 ? 0 after six innings . To start the seventh inning , Al Corwin replaced Bill Rigney for the Giants , who had pinch hit for Spencer . Andy Pafko hit a home run to start the inning , and Hodges walked ; he later scored on

the fifth and final error made by the Giants to make the score 8 ? 0 . The bottom of the seventh and the eighth inning passed without a hit . In the ninth inning , Walker hit a home run , the fourth of the game , to make the score 10 ? 0 . The Giants failed to get a hit in the bottom of the ninth , ending the game . Labine pitched a six @-@ hit shutout , not allowing a hit in the final four innings as the series went to a deciding third game .

= = Game 3 summary = =

Game three was also held at the Polo Grounds . With each team having won one game , it was time for a matchup between the two teams ' ace pitchers . Sal Maglie was on the mound for New York , while Brooklyn called on Don Newcombe ; both pitchers had winning records against the opposing team heading into the matchup . After Maglie walked two batters in the top of the first inning , Jackie Robinson singled , scoring the game 's first run when Pee Wee Reese crossed home plate . No further hits were allowed until the bottom of the second , when Whitey Lockman and Bobby Thomson singled ; neither scored , and it remained 1 ? 0 through two innings .

The game then became a pitcher 's duel ; Maglie and Newcombe did not allow a hit in the third or fourth innings . In the fifth , Billy Cox singled on a bunt , and Thomson hit a double , but the score remained 1 ? 0 through five innings . Duke Snider singled in the sixth inning , but was caught stealing second . Neither team got another hit until the seventh inning . Rube Walker singled for the Dodgers , and Monte Irvin led off the bottom of the seventh with a double for the Giants . He reached third base after a bunt , and scored on a sacrifice fly by Thomson , tying the score at one run each .

In the top of the eighth , the Dodgers scored three runs off Maglie . Reese and Snider hit back @-@ to @-@ back singles , and Maglie threw a wild pitch , allowing Reese to score . After Robinson was walked , Andy Pafko hit a single to score Snider . Cox added another single to score Robinson before the inning ended , making made the score 4 ? 1 in favor of the Dodgers . Newcombe got the Giants out in order in the bottom of the eighth , and Larry Jansen did the same in relief of Maglie in the top of the ninth .

Alvin Dark led off with a single in the bottom of the ninth , and Don Mueller followed with another . After Monte Irvin popped out to first base , Whitey Lockman hit a double to left @-@ center field , scoring Dark and putting Mueller on third . Upon sliding into third , Mueller sprained his ankle and had to leave the game . As Mueller went to the locker room , Dodger manager Chuck Dressen summoned game 1 starter Ralph Branca in to relieve Newcombe on only one day 's rest . Bobby Thomson came up to bat , and on Branca 's second pitch , Thomson drove a pitch to deep left field for a walk @-@ off home run to clinch the pennant for the Giants . This home run came to be known as the " Shot Heard ' Round the World " as the Giants won the National League pennant , advancing to the World Series .

= = Aftermath = =

The following day , sportswriter Red Smith opened his recap of the game for the New York Herald Tribune with the following lead : " Now it is done . Now the story ends . And there is no way to tell it . The art of fiction is dead . Reality has strangled invention . Only the utterly impossible , the inexpressibly fantastic , can ever be plausible again . " After winning the pennant , the Giants lost to the Yankees in the World Series four games to two . The Brooklyn Dodgers rebounded to win the National League pennant in 1952 , but lost the 1952 World Series to the Yankees four games to three .

The three games counted statistically as regular season games . As a result , Hodges and Furillo led the league with 158 games played , which could not have been equaled by anyone but a Brooklyn or New York player . Monte Irvin increased his runs batted in total to 121 , leading the NL that year . Larry Jansen 's win in the final game gave him 23 wins on the year , tying him for the MLB lead with Maglie ; had he finished the game he would have led all of baseball with 24 . Newcombe 's two strikeouts in game three totalled 164 on the season for him , tying him for the NL

lead with Warren Spahn and the MLB lead with Spahn and Vic Raschi . Campanella finished the season with a .325 batting average , 33 doubles , 33 home runs , and 108 runs batted in , and won the Major League Baseball Most Valuable Player Award at the end of the season . Mays finished the season with a .274 batting average , 22 doubles , and 20 home runs in 121 games , and won the Major League Baseball Rookie of the Year Award .

In 2001 , Journalist Joshua Prager published that the Giants secretly learned opponents ' finger signals , when several players told the Wall Street Journal that beginning on July 20 , 1951 , the team used a telescope and buzzer wire to steal the finger signals of opposing catchers careless enough to leave their signs unprotected . Giants catcher Sal Yvars told Prager that he relayed to Thomson the stolen sign for Branca 's fastball . Thomson always insisted that he had no foreknowledge of Branca 's pitch . Branca had been aware of the rumors and was skeptical of Thomson 's denial , but later told The New York Times in 2001 , " I didn 't want to diminish a legendary moment in baseball . And even if Bobby knew what was coming , he had to hit it Knowing the pitch doesn 't always help . "

= = Quotes = =

Ernie Harwell on NBC

Russ Hodges on WMCA