

= 2008 American League Central tie @-@ breaker game =

The 2008 American League Central tie @-@ breaker game was a one @-@ game extension to Major League Baseball 's (MLB) 2008 regular season , played between the Chicago White Sox and Minnesota Twins to determine the champion of the American League 's (AL) Central Division . It was played at US Cellular Field in Chicago , Illinois , on September 30 , 2008 . The White Sox won the game , 1 ? 0 , on a home run by Jim Thome , the lowest @-@ scoring game in MLB tie @-@ breaker history . The Sox advanced to the 2008 AL Division Series , where they lost to the Tampa Bay Rays , three games to one ; the Twins failed to qualify for the postseason .

The game was necessary after both teams finished the season with identical win ? loss records of 88 ? 74 . The White Sox won a coin flip late in the season which , by rule , awarded them home field in the game . In baseball statistics , the tie @-@ breaker counted as the 163rd regular season game by both teams , with all events in the game added to regular season statistics .

= = Background = =

Prior to the start of the season , the Detroit Tigers and Cleveland Indians , the division 's top two finishers in the previous season , were predicted to be the strongest teams by journalists such as Tom Verducci of ESPN and Joe Sheehan of Baseball Prospectus . However , the Indians lineup was weakened by injuries and spent just 13 days of the season in the division lead , last on May 17 . The Tigers never led the AL Central and finished the season in last place , 14 games back .

The White Sox led for most of the season starting with a tie for first on May 17 , held at least a share of the lead for 154 days , and never dropped more than a game behind the leader . The Twins spent much of the season in second place behind the White Sox , along with 54 days in the lead . Despite going 11 ? 15 in September , the Twins took a half @-@ game lead with an extra innings win over the White Sox on September 25 that capped a three @-@ game sweep of Chicago . The Twins maintained that lead through their final game , forcing Chicago to play a make @-@ up on September 29 against the Tigers which had been rained out earlier that month . The White Sox won , 8 ? 2 , leaving the Sox and Twins tied atop the AL Central with 88 ? 74 records , forcing a tie @-@ breaker to decide the division . Tickets for the tie @-@ breaker sold out within an hour of the end of the September 29 game .

The White Sox won the right to play at U.S. Cellular Field , their home field , as a result of a coin flip earlier in September . Fans were encouraged to wear all @-@ black clothing to show support for the White Sox . The game was broadcast on TBS . The White Sox used John Danks on three days rest as their starter , and the Twins started Nick Blackburn .

= = Game summary = =

Box score for " Blackout Day " on Tuesday September 30 , 2008 ? 6 : 37 p.m. (CT) at US Cellular Field in Chicago , Illinois

Both Blackburn and Danks held the game scoreless early on , allowing only six baserunners through the first four innings of the game . The Twins ' Michael Cuddyer led off the top of the fifth with a double , the only Twins runner in scoring position for the entire game . Danks induced a deep flyball out from Delmon Young , which allowed Cuddyer to advance to third . Brendan Harris hit a deep flyball to center field which was caught for an out by Ken Griffey , Jr . Cuddyer tried to score on the ball as a sacrifice fly , but Griffey delivered an accurate throw to home plate and White Sox catcher A. J. Pierzynski blocked the plate and tagged out Cuddyer to end the inning . This play drew praise after the game as a " nice throw " and a " defensive gem " .

The only run of the game scored when White Sox designated hitter Jim Thome led off the bottom of the seventh inning with a solo home run . Blackburn got Paul Konerko to ground out , but allowed a double to Griffey and , following an intentional walk to Alexei Ramírez , José Mijares relieved him . John Danks lasted through eight innings without allowing a run and was relieved by closer Bobby Jenks in the ninth . Jenks recorded three outs , securing the White Sox ' 1 ? 0 victory with his 30th

save of the season . Twins batters Joe Mauer , Justin Morneau , and Cuddyer had a combined 22 hits in 40 at bat (.550 batting average) against Danks for their careers but in the tie game breaker they combined to go 1 ? for 9 (.111) with 3 strikeouts . This game saw the lowest combined score of any tie game breaker game in MLB history , three runs lower than the 3 ? 1 score of the first game of the 1951 National League tie game breaker series .

= = Aftermath = =

With the victory , the White Sox earned their first playoff berth since their win in the 2005 World Series . However , they lost to the eventual pennant winning Tampa Bay Rays , three games to one . Statistically , the game counted as the 163rd regular season game . Thome 's home run , for example , was his 34th of the season . This total brought him a tie for fourth most in the league . Danks lowered his earned run average from 3 @.47 to 3 @.32 in the game , which moved him from a tie for tenth @-@ best in the league with Zack Greinke to fifth place . Mauer , Morneau , and White Sox outfielder Carlos Quentin won Silver Slugger Awards for their offensive performances in the 2008 regular season . Mauer also won a Rawlings Gold Glove Award that year . This was the last tie game breaker with home field determined by a coin flip . Following the 2008 season MLB amended their rules , leaving future tie game breaker sites to be determined on a series of performance @-@ based criteria beginning with the head @-@ to @-@ head record between the teams .