

= 1998 National League Wild Card tie @-@ breaker game =

The 1998 National League wild @-@ card tie @-@ breaker game was a one @-@ game extension to Major League Baseball 's (MLB) 1998 regular season , played between the Chicago Cubs and San Francisco Giants to determine the winner of the National League (NL) wild card . The game took place at Wrigley Field in Chicago , on September 28 , 1998 . The Cubs won the game 5 ? 3 , holding the Giants scoreless for the majority of the game until the Giants threatened heavily in the ninth inning and scored all three of their runs . As a result of the game , the Cubs qualified for the postseason and the Giants did not .

The game was necessary after both teams finished the season with identical win ? loss records of 89 ? 73 . The Cubs won a coin flip late in the season which , by rule at the time , awarded them home field for the game . This victory advanced the Cubs to the 1998 NL Division Series (NLDS) where they were swept by the Atlanta Braves , ending the Cubs ' season . Michael Jordan , a popular Chicago sportsman then ending his career with the Chicago Bulls , threw the game 's ceremonial first pitch . In baseball statistics , the tie @-@ breaker counted as the 163rd regular season game for both teams , with all events in the game added to regular season statistics .

= = Background = =

The Chicago Cubs finished the previous season at the bottom of the Central division with a 68 ? 94 record while the Giants won the West at 90 ? 72 , though were defeated by the eventual 1997 World Series champion Florida Marlins in the NLDS . The Giants ' Barry Bonds drew criticism for his postseason performance , which had been a recurring criticism dating back to his time with the Pittsburgh Pirates . The Cubs made several offseason acquisitions following the 1997 season including trading Doug Glanville for second baseman Mickey Morandini along with signing Jeff Blauser and Henry Rodríguez as free agents .

One notable event of the 1998 season was the race for the home run title and Roger Maris ' single @-@ season record of 61 home runs between the Cubs ' Sammy Sosa and the Cardinals ' Mark McGwire . McGwire ultimately won , setting a new record of 70 while Sosa closed the season with 66 . Bonds would top their totals with 73 home runs in 2001 , setting the current record , while McGwire and Sosa 's totals remain the second and third highest figures in MLB history . Additionally , three teams finished the 1998 season within one game of one another in the race for the National League wild card : the Cubs , Giants , and New York Mets . This late @-@ season race included a dramatic Cubs loss to the Brewers on September 23 . The Cubs led 7 ? 5 with two outs and the bases loaded for the Brewers in the bottom of the ninth inning when Brant Brown dropped a fly ball , allowing three unearned runs to score on his error and losing the Cubs the game . This loss gained notoriety for announcer and former @-@ Cub Ron Santo 's call of the final play , yelling " Oh , no ! " as the final runs scored .

The Mets were tied with the Cubs and Giants in the wild @-@ card race as late in the season as September 25 at 88 ? 72 . However , the Mets lost their remaining two games and finished their season one game back of the Cubs and Giants who ended tied at 89 ? 73 . This record was also the best non @-@ division @-@ winning record and as such a tie @-@ breaker was necessary to determine the wild @-@ card winner . A coin flip on September 14 gave the Cubs ' home field advantage , setting Wrigley Field as the location for the game . In the event of a three @-@ way tie the Cubs were presented with the choice to either host two home games or receive a bye and play the winner of a Mets @-@ Giants game on the road because they had the best combined record against the Mets and Giants . Cubs ' general manager Ed Lynch decided on the second option , though the choice was moot as the Mets fell out of the race . The Cubs ' Steve Trachsel and Mark Gardner of the Giants were slated to start the tie @-@ breaker on the September 28 .

= = Game summary = =

Box score for Monday September 28 , 1998 ? 7 : 10 p.m. (CT) at Wrigley Field in Chicago

The game remained scoreless in the early innings , with only two baserunners apiece for each team through the first three innings . The Giants loaded the bases with two outs in the top of the 4th inning , but Brian Johnson struck out to end the inning . The first runs of the game came in the top of the 5th as Henry Rodriguez singled to lead off the inning and scored on a home run by Gary Gaetti to give the Cubs a 2 ? 0 lead . The Cubs threatened again in the next inning with singles by Lance Johnson and Sammy Sosa . Rich Rodriguez relieved Gardner , but loaded the bases with a walk to Mark Grace and allowed a single to Matt Mieske which scored two more runs and extended the Cubs ' lead to 4 ? 0 . John Johnstone relieved Rodriguez and closed the inning without further scoring .

After getting one out in the top of the 7th , Steve Trachsel allowed a single and a walk to pinch hitters Brent Mayne and Armando Ríos respectively . The Cubs double switched , bringing in Matt Karchner to relieve Trachsel and Orlando Merced to play left field . Karchner induced another out before loading the bases on a single by Shawon Dunston . Félix Heredia entered in relief of Karchner and got Barry Bonds to ground out to first base to end the inning . The Cubs further extended their lead in the bottom of the 8th inning . After Alvin Morman got Morandini to strike out to open the inning the Giants double switched to bring in José Mesa to pitch and Bill Mueller at third base . Mesa allowed a single to Sammy Sosa and a double to Mark Grace which advanced Sosa to third . Following a ground out Mesa threw a wild pitch while facing Gaetti and Sosa scored to make the game 5 ? 0 .

The Giants responded in the top of the 9th , scoring their only runs of the game . Kevin Tapani allowed successive singles to Brent Mayne and Mueller to open the inning before Terry Mulholland relieved him . Stan Javier singled to score Mayne and Ellis Burks then walked to load the bases . Bonds came to bat with the bases loaded for the second time in the game and lined out to deep right field , scoring Mueller on a sacrifice fly and Javier advanced to third base . Rod Beck entered and got successive outs by Jeff Kent , which scored Javier , and Joe Carter to end the game 5 ? 3 for the Cubs .

= = Aftermath = =

Chicago 's win clinched the team 's 15th postseason berth in franchise history , their first in 9 years since losing in the 1989 National League Championship Series . The Cubs ' presence in the postseason , playing for a spot in the World Series , led several sportswriters to reference the Curse of the Billy Goat and the difficulties the Cubs ' had faced since 1945 . The Billy Goat story suggests that Billy Sianis cursed the Cubs after he and his goat were asked to leave game four of the 1945 World Series . The playoff berth matched the Cubs with the Atlanta Braves in the NLDS , where the Cubs were swept three games to none . The Cubs have not made the World Series since 1945 and have not won a title since 1908 .

In baseball statistics tie @-@ breakers count as regular season games , with all events in them added to regular season statistics . For example , the Chicago Sun @-@ Times noted that Sammy Sosa could have added to his notable home run total in the game . Sosa did add to his league @-@ leading strikeout total with one in the 4th inning . Beck also added to his league @-@ leading total in games played and earned his 51st save of the season which finished 2nd to Trevor Hoffman 's 53 but is tied for the 9th highest single @-@ season save total in MLB history . Several Cubs and Giants won awards for their regular season performances including Rookie of the Year honors for Kerry Wood , a Silver Slugger Award for Sosa , and a Rawlings Gold Glove Award for J. T. Snow . Sosa also won the Most Valuable Player award , earning 30 out of 32 first place votes (with McGwire taking the remaining 2) .

Barry Bonds drew criticism after the game for his poor performance , including twice making an out with the bases loaded , with some suggesting that Bonds often played poorly in " big games " . Bonds ' 0 ? 4 performance with an RBI and a strikeout earned him a ? .186 win probability added (WPA) , the lowest figure for any player in the game . WPA is a statistic which takes the game situation into account to quantify how a player altered his team 's chances of winning . Bonds ' figure translates into decreasing the Giants ' chances of success by 18 @.@ 6 % . The book Game of

Shadows , which details Bonds ' suggested use of performance @-@ enhancing drugs (PED) , argues that Bonds grew jealous and resentful of the attention Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa were given during their record chase . As a result , according to Game of Shadows , Bonds turned to weight training under Greg Anderson who began providing him with steroids and other PEDs following the 1998 season .