

= 1978 American League East tie @-@ breaker game =

The 1978 American League East tie @-@ breaker game was a one @-@ game extension to Major League Baseball 's (MLB) 1978 regular season , played between the rival New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox to determine the winner of the American League 's (AL) East Division . The game was played at Fenway Park in Boston , Massachusetts , on October 2 , 1978 . The tie @-@ breaker was necessitated after the Yankees and Red Sox finished the season tied for first place in the AL East with identical 99 ? 63 records . The Red Sox were the home team by virtue of a coin toss . The playoff was counted as a regular @-@ season game for statistical purposes . 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 .

Ron Guidry started for the Yankees , while Mike Torrez started for the Red Sox . The Yankees fell behind 2 ? 0 , with a home run by Carl Yastrzemski and a run batted in single by Jim Rice . The Yankees took the lead on a three run home run by Bucky Dent . The Yankees defeated the Red Sox 5 ? 4 , with Guidry getting the win , while Goose Gossage recorded a save . With the victory , the Yankees clinched the AL East championship , en route to winning the 1978 World Series . As of 2016 , the ' 78 Yankees remain the last team to have won the World Series after playing a tiebreaker .

= = Background = =

The Yankees and Red Sox had combined to win the past three American League (AL) pennants . The Red Sox lost the 1975 World Series . The Yankees lost the 1976 World Series , and then won the 1977 World Series . The Yankees and Red Sox were both seen as contenders for the AL East . The Yankees , Red Sox , and Baltimore Orioles , who competed for the AL East championship in 1977 , all expected that they would compete for the AL East in 1978 . The Orioles and Red Sox tied for second place in 1977 , 2 1 ? 2 games behind the Yankees . The young Detroit Tigers , with Lou Whitaker and Alan Trammell , also appeared ready to challenge for the AL East .

The Red Sox signed Mike Torrez , who won two games in the 1977 World Series for the Yankees , as a free agent during the offseason . Before the season , the Red Sox acquired Dennis Eckersley to join Torrez , Bill Lee , and Luis Tiant in their starting rotation . The Yankees acquired Goose Gossage and Rawly Eastwick to join Sparky Lyle , 1977 's AL Cy Young Award winner , in their bullpen during the offseason . Both teams placed five players on the AL squad for the 1978 Major League Baseball All @-@ Star Game : Gossage , Ron Guidry , Graig Nettles , Thurman Munson , and Reggie Jackson represented the Yankees , while Carl Yastrzemski , Fred Lynn , Rick Burleson , Carlton Fisk , and Jim Rice represented the Red Sox .

The Red Sox had once led by 10 games ; the Milwaukee Brewers were in second place at the time , while the Yankees were in third . The Yankees experienced injuries to Don Gullett , Willie Randolph , Catfish Hunter , Bucky Dent , and Mickey Rivers , and fell to fourth place in the division . After a shake up engineered by owner George Steinbrenner , with Munson moving from catcher to right field , the Yankees fired their combustible manager Billy Martin , replacing him with Bob Lemon . The Yankees trailed Boston by 14 games by mid @-@ July . However , New York finished the season 53 ? 21 in their last 74 games (a .716 winning percentage) , while the Red Sox went 38 ? 36 (.514) over the same time frame . This included a four @-@ game sweep of Boston in Fenway Park in early September . The Yankees outscored the Red Sox by a composite score of 42 ? 9 , and the series was dubbed " The Boston Massacre " by the sports press . By the end of the four games , the two teams were tied for first place .

The Yankees took the AL East lead three days later , and did not lose it until the final Sunday of the season . Holding a one @-@ game lead with seven games to play , New York finished on a 6 ? 1 run . However , Boston was a perfect 7 ? 0 , enabling them to tie the Yankees at season 's end . After New York lost to the Cleveland Indians on October 1 , the Fenway Park video screen flashed the happy news : " THANK YOU RICK WAITS , GAME TOMORROW . "

= = The game = =

The tie @-@ breaker game was the first in the AL since 1948 , when the Cleveland Indians defeated the Red Sox , and the first in MLB since the advent of the division system in 1969 . Guidry , who won 24 games in the 162 @-@ game regular season , started on three days of rest , less rest than usual . Torrez started the game for the Red Sox . He started for the Red Sox on Opening Day and had a 16 ? 12 record , but contributed to the Red Sox struggles late in the season with six consecutive losses .

Carl Yastrzemski hit a home run in the second inning , and Jim Rice drove in Rick Burleson with a single in the sixth inning . Meanwhile , the Yankees had been held to two hits through six innings . With one out in the seventh inning , Chris Chambliss and Roy White of the Yankees both singled off of Torrez , and pinch hitter Jim Spencer flied out . Dent then hit a fly ball that cleared the Green Monster wall in left field to give the Yankees a 3 ? 2 lead .

Torrez was removed from the game after walking Mickey Rivers . Reliever Bob Stanley came in , and after Rivers stole second Thurman Munson drove him in with a double . In the eighth inning , a home run by Reggie Jackson made the score 5 ? 2 in favor of the Yankees . The Red Sox cut New York 's lead to just one run in the bottom of the eighth against closer Goose Gossage on RBI singles by Fred Lynn and Yastrzemski . But the Yankees would hold off the Red Sox , thanks in part to a heads @-@ up defensive play by right fielder Lou Piniella with one out in the bottom of the ninth . With Burleson on first base , Jerry Remy hit a line drive to Piniella in right field , but Piniella was blinded by the late afternoon sun and could not see the ball . However , he pretended to field the play normally , pounding his glove as though he would easily catch the ball . This prevented Burleson from advancing to third base . When Jim Rice followed with a deep fly to the outfield , Burleson could only move up to third base instead of scoring the tying run .

Batting with two out and two men on , Yastrzemski popped out to third baseman Graig Nettles in foul territory for the game 's final out , and New York won the game , 5 ? 4 . Guidry improved his record to 25 ? 3 , while Torrez took the loss . Gossage recorded his 27th save .

= = Line score = =

= = Box score = =

= = Broadcast = =

This game was televised regionally by the respective teams ' rights holders , WSBK @-@ TV in Boston and WPIX in New York City . ABC Sports picked up the contest for national viewers , thus providing alternate coverage of the game on its New York and Boston affiliates . Keith Jackson , Howard Cosell and Don Drysdale narrated the action in the ABC booth .

On radio , the CBS Radio Network offered national coverage of the game , with Ernie Harwell doing play @-@ by @-@ play and Win Elliot working as an analyst . Locally in the home markets , WINS in New York City and WITS in Boston fed the game to the teams ' respective radio networks .

In the Red Sox ' broadcast booth , Dick Stockton and Ken " Hawk " Harrelson worked the television side while Ned Martin and Jim Woods were heard on radio . In the Yankees ' booth , Phil Rizzuto , Bill White and Frank Messer alternated play @-@ by @-@ play on both radio and television , and were backed up on radio by Fran Healy .

= = Aftermath = =

For the third straight year , the Yankees went on to face the Kansas City Royals in the 1978 American League Championship Series . The Yankees won the best @-@ of @-@ five series for their third consecutive pennant . New York defeated the Los Angeles Dodgers in the World Series to

win their second consecutive championship , and 22nd overall .

The loss of the Red Sox was seen as a manifestation of the Curse of the Bambino , long thought to be the reason behind all things bad that ever happened to the Red Sox . Described as a " shocking blast " by the Sporting News , Dent 's home run silenced the Fenway Park crowd . For the light @-@ hitting Dent , it was just his fifth home run of the 1978 season . It sealed Dent 's reputation among Yankee fans , while inspiring the permanent nickname " Bucky Fucking Dent " in New England . Dent , later the manager of the Yankees , was fired during a series in Boston in 1990 . Twenty @-@ five years later , in Game 7 of the 2003 American League Championship Series , Aaron Boone received similar treatment by Red Sox fans after he hit the home run in the bottom of the 11th inning that clinched the pennant for the Yankees , but the Yankees would later lose to the Florida Marlins in the World Series , which went six games .

Guidry and Rice were considered candidates for the AL Most Valuable Player (MVP) Award for their strong seasons . Rice was named MVP , with Guidry finishing second in the voting . Guidry won the AL Cy Young Award . Lemon was named AL Manager of the Year .