

= 1980 National League West tie @-@ breaker game =

The 1980 National League West tie @-@ breaker game was a one @-@ game extension to Major League Baseball 's (MLB) 1980 regular season , played between the Houston Astros and the Los Angeles Dodgers to decide the winner of the National League 's (NL) West Division . The game was played on October 6 , 1980 , at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles , California . It was necessary after the Dodgers overcame a three @-@ game deficit in the final three games of the season and both teams finished with identical win ? loss records of 92 ? 70 . The Dodgers won a coin flip late in the season which , by rule at the time , awarded them home field for the game .

The Astros won the game , 7 ? 1 , with Houston starter Joe Niekro throwing a complete game . This victory advanced the Astros to the 1980 NL Championship Series (NLCS) , in which they lost to the Philadelphia Phillies , ending the Astros ' season . 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 Cincinnati Reds won the West division the previous season with the Astros finishing 1 @.@ 5 games back in second , and the Dodgers 11 @.@ 5 back in third . However , the Reds went on to lose the 1979 NLCS in three games to the Pittsburgh Pirates , ending their season . The Astros acquired Joe Morgan and Nolan Ryan via free agency during the offseason and the Dodgers signed Dave Goltz . Dave Kindred of the Washington Post , George Vecsey of The New York Times , and Astros ' relief pitcher Joe Sambito all credited Morgan 's leadership with the Astros ' success in 1980 .

The Reds maintained early success in 1980 with an eight @-@ game winning streak to open the season and held at least a share of first place in the division until April 30 . They were not as successful over the remainder of the season , only occasionally taking the division lead and last holding it on August 16 . The Astros held the lead for the majority of the season thereafter , including a three @-@ game lead over Los Angeles entering the final series of the season . The series matched the Astros with the Dodgers for three games at Dodger Stadium . The Dodgers won all three games , all by a single run , stopping the Astros from clinching a division championship as the two teams sat tied at 92 ? 70 . Kindred described the Astros as losing each game of the series by " fail [ing] to make elementary fielding plays . " The final game included a run @-@ scoring pinch hit single by Manny Mota , who had been almost exclusively a coach and not a player that season , and a home run by Ron Cey which also scored Steve Garvey , who had reached base in the previous at bat on an error . The Dodgers needed each of these runs as they won the game 4 ? 3 .

= = Game summary = =

Box score for Monday October 6 , 1980 ? 3 : 10 p.m. (PT) at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles , California

The Astros took their lead early , scoring in the top of the first inning . Terry Puhl led off the game reaching base on an error by the second baseman . Enos Cabell followed Puhl with a single and , while Joe Morgan batted , stole second base to put runners at second and third . Morgan struck out and José Cruz appeared to hit into a fielder 's choice but a catching error by the catcher allowed Puhl to score , Cabell to advance to third base , and Cruz to reach safely all with no out recorded . Cabell then scored on a César Cedeño ground out to make the game 2 ? 0 . Art Howe singled to advance Cruz to third , but Dodgers ' starting pitcher Dave Goltz escaped the inning without further scoring .

The Astros ' Joe Niekro retired the Dodgers in order in the first and second innings . The Astros added to their lead in the top of the third as Cedeño singled , stole second (after Cruz had been caught stealing earlier in the inning) , and scored on Art Howe 's home run to make the game 4 ? 0 . Niekro allowed two successive singles to lead off the bottom of the inning , but proceeded to retire

three straight Dodgers without allowing either runner to score . The Astros further added to their lead in the fourth , as Puhl singled on a bunt to third base and then stole second and third base while Cabell batted . Both he and Morgan walked to load the bases with one out . Puhl scored on a Cruz sacrifice fly , Cedeño walked to re @-@ load the bases , and finally a Howe single gave the Astros another two runs to make the game 7 ? 0 .

The Dodgers scored their only run in the bottom of the fourth as Dusty Baker singled , advanced to second on an error , and scored on another single . They threatened again in the sixth inning , loading the bases , though they failed to score . That was the only inning after the fourth in which a Dodgers ' runner reached scoring position . Niekro steadied again after the sixth , allowing just one baserunner on a two @-@ out ninth @-@ inning single over the remaining three innings .

= = Aftermath = =

Houston 's win clinched the team 's first postseason berth in franchise history . The Astros lost the five @-@ game NLCS to the Phillies 3 ? 2 , ending their season . Due to the 1981 Major League Baseball strike , the following season was split into halves and the winner of each half advanced to the postseason . The Dodgers won the first half and the Astros the second and so met in the first National League Division Series . The Dodgers won , and went on to win the 1981 World Series . The Astros did not return to the NLCS until 1986 and did not win a NL pennant until 2005 , leading to a loss in the 2005 World Series .

In baseball statistics , tie @-@ breakers count as regular season games , with all events in them added to regular season statistics . Niekro , for example , reached his 20th win to break a tie with Jim Bibby for the 2nd most wins in the NL that season . Similarly , Steve Garvey played in his 163rd game of the season , leading the league with a figure which could not have been equaled by anyone not on the Astros or Dodgers . Dusty Baker won a Silver Slugger Award and Steve Howe , who pitched the final two scoreless innings of the tie @-@ breaker for the Dodgers in relief , won the Rookie of the Year Award for their performances in the regular season . Additionally six Dodgers (Garvey , Davey Lopes , Bill Russell , Reggie Smith , Jerry Reuss , and Bob Welch) and two Astros (J. R. Richard and Cruz) were named to the National League 's All @-@ Star team .