

Sports

# Seager homers twice as Dodgers clinch 7th consecutive National League West title

**BALTIMORE:** Corey Seager homered twice in the first three innings and finished with five RBIs as the visiting Los Angeles Dodgers defeated the Baltimore Orioles 7-3 on Tuesday night to clinch their seventh consecutive National League West title. The Dodgers, who have made it to the World Series the past two seasons but lost both times, had a low-key celebration on the field after the final out on Tuesday. They subsequently partied in the visiting clubhouse. Seager hit a three-run homer in the first and belted a two-run shot in the third as the Dodgers took a big lead early on and never looked back. Both long balls came off Baltimore starter Ty Blach (1-3). Walker Buehler (13-3) fired seven shutout innings for Los Angeles, striking out 11 while yielding four hits and no walks.

**BREWERS 4, MARLINS 3**

Pinch hitter Tyler Austin lofted a tiebreaking sacrifice fly in the top of the ninth inning, and Milwaukee beat host Miami despite losing right fielder Christian Yelich to a season-ending knee injury. Yelich — a strong candidate to win his second straight National League MVP award — left the game in the top of the first inning after he fouled a ball off his right knee. The Brewers announced postgame that he fractured his kneecap. Milwaukee's ninth-inning rally started with a leadoff single from former Miami Hurricanes catcher Yasmani Grandal. Trent Grisham, who had replaced Yelich, then doubled, and Grandal scored when Miami center fielder Lewis Brinson's throw home was offline on Austin's fly.

**PADRES 9, CUBS 8 (10 INNINGS)**

Manuel Margot drew a four-pitch, walk-off walk from Steve Cishek with one out in the 10th inning to give host San Diego a victory over Chicago. The Padres held leads of 6-2 and 8-5, but the Cubs rallied to tie the game in the eighth on the second homers of the game by both Kris Bryant and Jason Heyward. Cishek retired the first batter he faced in the 10th before giving up an infield single to Luis Urias. Cishek (3-6) then issued walks to Austin Hedges and Travis Jankowski to load the bases before failing to throw a strike to Margot. Michel Baez (1-1) picked up his first major league win.

**INDIANS 8, ANGELS 0**

Zach Plesac threw a four-hit shutout to lead Cleveland past Los Angeles in Anaheim, Calif. Plesac (8-6) gave up two singles to David Fletcher and doubles to Kole Calhoun and Taylor Ward while throwing 114 pitches. He struck out five and walked two. The 24-year-old rookie never previously pitched past seven innings in the majors. Jordan Luplow homered, drove in three and scored twice. Franmil Reyes drove in four runs, and Francisco Lindor hit his 30th home run of the season to allow Cleveland to keep pace with Tampa Bay and Oakland in the American League wild-card race.

**METS 3, DIAMONDBACKS 2**

Zack Wheeler tossed seven strong innings, and Todd Frazier accounted for all the Mets' runs with a pair of RBI doubles as New York beat visiting

Arizona. Wheeler (11-7) allowed one run on seven hits and two walks while striking out seven. He limited the Diamondbacks to two hits in 12 at-bats with runners on base. Brad Brach recorded two outs in the eighth but gave up a homer to Eduardo Escobar before Justin Wilson got the final four outs for his second save. Wilson struck out ex-Mets infielder Wilmer Flores with two on for the final out.

**PHILLIES 6, BRAVES 5**

Corey Dickerson homered twice and knocked in three runs to lift host Philadelphia past Atlanta. J.T. Realmuto and Bryce Harper each added a home run, and Scott Kingery contributed an inside-the-park homer. Blake Parker (3-2) earned the win in relief, while Hector Neris earned his 25th save with a scoreless ninth inning. Ronald Acuna Jr. and Freddie Freeman each had three hits for the Braves, and Johan Camargo homered.

**TWINS 5, NATIONALS 0**

Mitch Garver hit a two-run homer and Jose Berrios pitched seven strong innings to lead Minnesota to a victory over Washington in Minneapolis. Garver became the third Twins player to reach the 30-homer mark this season, joining Max Kepler (36) and Nelson Cruz (35). It's the first time since 1987 that Minnesota has had three players hit 30 home runs in a season and the fifth time in franchise history. Berrios (12-8), who entered the contest with a 1-3 record and 8.07 ERA in his six previous starts, allowed just two hits and a walk while striking out four.

**RAYS 5, RANGERS 3 (11 INNINGS)**

Tampa Bay scored a pair of unearned runs with the help of two Texas throwing errors in the 11th inning to post a win in Arlington, Texas. Emilio Pagan (4-2) pitched a scoreless 10th for the victory, and Pete Fairbanks worked around two hits in the bottom of the 11th to notch his first career save. Austin Meadows slugged a two-run homer for the Rays, who won their sixth straight. Nick Solak went 2-for-5 with a two-run homer for the Rangers.

**TIGERS 12, YANKEES 11**

Jordy Mercer hit a game-winning RBI single in the ninth as host Detroit overcame a six-homer onslaught by New York. Jeimer Candelario drove in three runs for Detroit while Christin Stewart homered and knocked in two runs. Joe Jimenez (4-7) pitched a scoreless inning to get the win for the Tigers, who wiped out an early six-run deficit. Brett Gardner and Didi Gregorius hit two homers apiece for New York. Edwin Encarnacion and Gleyber Torres also went deep.

**ATHLETICS 21, ASTROS 7**

Matt Olson and Sean Murphy recorded multi-homer games, and Oakland made amends for a 15-0 loss in the opener of a four-game series by dismantling host Houston. Olson set a single-season high with his 30th home run and then added his 31st as well, while Murphy ran his career and season totals to three. The Athletics slugged six homers, including



**BALTIMORE:** Caleb Ferguson #64 of the Los Angeles Dodgers pitches in the ninth inning against the Baltimore Orioles at Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Baltimore, Maryland. — AFP

three two-run blasts off Joe Biagini in the fourth inning. The Athletics were already comfortably ahead 11-2 before they teed off against Biagini. They tagged Wade Miley (13-5) for seven runs in the top of the first, stringing together six consecutive one-out singles after Marcus Semien opened the game with a single and Olson walked two batters later.

**BLUE JAYS 4, RED SOX 3**

Ken Giles retired Rafael Devers with two on in the ninth inning to seal host Toronto's victory over Boston to snap a season-high, seven-game losing streak. Giles converted his 19th save in 20 chances, but it was hardly easy. He needed to 29 pitches to cap a night in which six Toronto relievers combined for 4 2/3 scoreless innings. The Blue Jays scored all of their runs on homers by Cavan Biggio, Reese McGuire and Rowdy Tellez. The Red Sox lost their fourth straight and fell to 3-7 in their past 10 games.

**ROCKIES 2, CARDINALS 1**

Nolan Arenado homered for one of his two hits, Chi Chi Gonzalez pitched six solid innings for his first win of the season, and Colorado beat St. Louis in Denver. Gonzalez (1-6) gave up just one run on four hits, struck out four and didn't walk a batter. Jairo Diaz pitched two innings to pick up his second save, and Charlie Blackmon added two hits for the Rockies. Dexter Fowler doubled and scored for the Cardinals, who managed just six hits.

**WHITE SOX 7, ROYALS 3**

Yoan Moncada had three hits, including one of

Chicago's three home runs, as the host White Sox defeated visiting Kansas City. The Royals got home runs from Adalberto Mondesi, Alex Gordon and Ryan O'Hearn, but they were all solo shots, while Chicago got a grand slam from Eloy Jimenez and a two-run shot from Moncada. Ivan Nova (10-12) won despite serving up all three of the Royals' homers and allowing six hits in 5 2/3 innings. He struck out five without a walk.

**GIANTS 5, PIRATES 4**

Johnny Cueto made a masterful return to the mound after a 13-month absence, and San Francisco narrowly avoided a second straight bullpen meltdown in a victory over visiting Pittsburgh. Stephen Vogt had a two-run single and a two-run home run to account for nearly all the San Francisco offense, helping the Giants end a two-game losing streak. Cueto (1-0), pitching in the majors for the first time since July 28, 2018, demonstrated he's fully recovered from Tommy John surgery by firing five shutout innings, allowing just one hit and one walk. He struck out four.

**MARINERS 4, REDS 3**

Kyle Seager hit a two-run homer with two outs in the eighth inning as Seattle defeated visiting Cincinnati. Kyle Lewis, making his major league debut, and Dylan Moore also homered for the Mariners, who snapped a six-game losing streak that equaled their longest of the season. Brian O'Grady hit his first major league homer for the Reds. — Reuters

## Australia aim to finish Ashes mission with series win against England

**LONDON:** Australia head to the Oval hungry to win their first Ashes series in England since 2001 as the peerless Steve Smith seeks to inflict further pain on the hosts. Tim Paine's men finally saw off stubborn England at Old Trafford on Sunday to take a 2-1 lead in the five-Test series with just one match to go, meaning they will retain the urn.

To stand any chance of levelling the series, the World Cup winners will have to find a way to solve the riddle of the immovable Smith, who has scored 671 runs in just five innings at an astonishing average of more than 134.

The former captain, top of the international rankings, has carried his team's batting with three centuries and two fifties, including a double-century in the win in Manchester, with Marnus Labuschagne the only other batsman who has shown any consistency. Smith, who returned to Test action in England after completing a 12-month ball-tampering ban, has made his mountain of runs despite missing three innings after he was felled by a Jofra Archer bouncer. Given a full series, the freakish Smith might well have been even closer to Don Bradman's mark of 974 runs for the most runs ever made in a Test series, set in 1930. The other key factor for Australia has been the strength of their pace attack, with Josh Hazlewood and world number one Pat Cummins catching the eye with 42 wickets between them.

Australia coach Justin Langer, revelling in having the world's top-ranked batsman and bowler at his disposal, is urging the other batsmen to step up in the match starting on Thursday, even though he admits they lack experience.

"You can't just give them that experience, they have to earn that and we're very thankful to have Steve batting," he said. "I've never seen batting like that. You're still got to perform whether you're young or you're a veteran, but we also have to recognise they are young batsmen and it's a really tough school and hopefully they'll come through at some point."

Joe Root must inspire his troops to one last effort after a gruelling season in which England became world champions in the 50-over format for the first



**LONDON:** Australia's David Warner (L) prepares to bat in the nets during a training session at The Oval in London yesterday, on the eve of the start of the fifth and final Ashes cricket Test match between England and Australia. — AFP

time. Their failure in the Ashes has prompted questions over the Yorkshireman's position, but outgoing coach Trevor Bayliss is adamant the captain retains the support of the England hierarchy.

"He's not come under question from anyone making any decisions," Bayliss said. "He's under no pressure at all."

## Sri Lanka name depleted squads for Pakistan tour

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka yesterday named depleted squads for a six-match tour of Pakistan, after 10 top players opted out citing security concerns.

Lahiru Thirimanne has replaced one-day international skipper Dimuth Karunaratne, who refused to join the tour along with Twenty20 skipper Lasith Malinga. Thirimanne will lead a 15-member ODI squad, while the 16-member T20 squad will be led by Dasun Shanaka.

A majority of international teams have refused to tour Pakistan following a March 2009 militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus during a Test match in Lahore. The other eight players who opted out of the Pakistan tour are Thisara Perera, Angelo Mathews,

Speaking about Root's form with the bat, Bayliss added: "Everyone goes through periods where they don't score as many runs as they'd like. I think the Australian team have bowled pretty well to him."

England talisman Ben Stokes was included in an unchanged 13-man squad but will be assessed to find out whether he is fit to bowl at the Oval. — AFP

Niroshan Dickwella, Kusal Perera, Dhananjaya de Silva, Akila Dananjaya, Suranga Lakmal and Dinesh Chandimal.

**ODI squad:** Lahiru Thirimanne (Captain), Danushka Gunathilaka, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Avishka Fernando, Oshada Fernando, Shehan Jayasuriya, Dasun Shanaka, Minod Bhanuka, Angelo Perera, Wanindu Hasaranga, Lakshan Sandakan, Nuwan Pradeep, Isuru Udana, Kasun Rajitha, and Lahiru Kumara.

**T20 squad:** Dasun Shanaka (Captain), Danushka Gunathilaka, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Avishka Fernando, Oshada Fernando, Shehan Jayasuriya, Angelo Perera, Bhanuka Rajapaksha, Minod Bhanuka, Lahiru Madushanka, Wanindu Hasaranga, Lakshan Sandakan, Isuru Udana, Nuwan Pradeep, Kasun Rajitha, and Lahiru Kumara.

**Series schedule:**  
1st ODI — Karachi, September 27  
2nd ODI — Karachi, September 29  
3rd ODI — Karachi, October 2  
1st T20 — Lahore, October 5  
2nd T20 — Lahore, October 7  
3rd T20 — Lahore, October 9. — AFP

## India's selectors face call to solve opening woes

**MUMBAI:** Finding a solution to India's top-order batting conundrum will be top of selectors' agenda when they meet today to pick the squad for next month's home test series against South Africa.

Despite being the world's top-ranked test side India have struggled with their opening combination, which, in turn, has heaped pressure on the middle order.

Since 2018 KL Rahul, Murali Vijay, Shikhar Dhawan, Parthiv Patel, Prithvi Shaw, Mayank Agarwal and Hanuma Vihari have all opened in tests but none have been able to cement their spot. Experienced duo Dhawan and Vijay are not expected to be considered after repeated failures while Prithvi Shaw is currently serving a doping ban.

Rahul has played 36 tests but failed to score a half-century in his last seven matches while his opening partner in West Indies, Mayank Agarwal, has just four tests under his belt. With Ajinkya Rahane and Vihari putting in solid performances in the middle order in two tests against the West Indies, Rohit Sharma has had to sit out, prompting calls to try the limited-overs opener at the top of the order in the longest format too.

"As selection committee, we haven't met after the conclusion of the West Indies tour. We will definitely take this (Rohit as opener) point into consideration when we all meet and discuss about it," India's chief selector MSK Prasad told India Today. "KL is definitely a great talent. Of course, he is going through a bit of a tough time in test cricket and we are definitely concerned about his form. He needs to spend more time on the wicket and regain his touch and form."

Rohit, 32, has secured his place at the top of the order in the Twenty20 and 50-over formats and finished with the most runs at the recent World Cup in England. The only player in the world with three double hundreds in one-day internationals, Rohit bats in the middle order in the longest format but has never really flourished on the test stage.

He was dropped following a poor return in South Africa in early 2018 when he scored 78 runs in four innings. He played two tests in a four-match series in Australia at the end of the year, missing one match with injury and another due to the birth of his child. Virat Kohli's side should not see too many changes in the rest of the batting order while the bowling unit, which led them to a 2-0 win against the West Indies and to the top of the World Test Championship table with 120 points, should also remain mostly intact.

Vishakhapatnam will host the first Test between India and South Africa from Oct. 2 followed by matches at Pune and Ranchi. — Reuters