

AROUND THE LEAGUE · NIGHTLY BRIEF

Three Division Series ended in one night, the fourth forced a Game 4, and the NLCS is set: LAD vs MIL for the third straight October.

4 Division Series finals on the board

3 series clinched tonight (TB, LAD, MIL)

19 strikeouts by Cleveland pitching, most ever in a nine-inning postseason game

17 of those 19 K came from the bullpen

5 runs allowed by Tampa Bay across the entire ALDS (1.67 per game)

1 Game 4 left on the calendar: CLE @ CHW, Chicago leads 2-1

TALKING POINTS

- **Three series close in one night:** Tampa Bay sweeps the **93-win Yankees** (3-0), Los Angeles takes the NLDS **3-1**, Milwaukee takes its **3-1**. The NLCS is a rematch of last year's LAD sweep of MIL (LAD 100-62 vs MIL 103-59, the best record in the slate), while the AL side waits on CLE/CHW.
- **Bullpen-by-committee as a survival plan:** Cleveland ran a **0.2-IP opener** (Daniel Espino) and got **8.1 relief innings / 17 K**, versus a **9.6 team K/9** season rate. Stephen Vogt called it 'all hands on deck' and used **seven pitchers**, none for more than **2.2 innings**.
- **A season-long HR suppression flipped in one inning:** Max Fried allowed **2 HR in 5.2 IP** tonight after surrendering just **4 HR all season** (0.32 HR/9). **Victor Mesa Jr.** (first career postseason HR) and **Ryan Vilade** both went deep to end the Yankees' season.
- **LA's first 10 playoff runs all came on home runs**, the longest such streak to open a postseason in MLB history, and it ended in Game 4 when **Ohtani scored on a Dubón error**. Dave Roberts: 'I've been preparing myself all series for a moment like that... to be able to win today, get back, reset, have a day off tomorrow, set the rotation, it's huge.' (AFP, Oct 7)
- **Two eliminated clubs' postmortems:** Atlanta went **1-for-23 with RISP (.043)** across the series and was held to **one run or fewer in back-to-back home playoff games** for the first time since 2023; Aaron Boone on the Yankees: 'The ending is terrible. It's a broken clubhouse.' (AP, Oct 7)

ALDS: CLE @ CHW (Chicago leads 2-1)

- Cleveland's **9-3** win was its largest postseason victory since a **7-0 shutout of Detroit on Oct 5, 2024**, and its most runs in a playoff game since **Sept 30, 2020**. The 8 walks were Cleveland's most in a postseason game since **Oct 10, 1999** (9 vs Boston).
- The White Sox still lead the best-of-five **2-1**, with **Game 4 tomorrow (Oct 8) at Guaranteed Rate Field**. A CHW win ends it; a CLE win forces **Game 5 back in Cleveland (Oct 10)**.
- Season records are near-mirrors: **CLE 85-77 (L10 8-2)** vs **CHW 84-78 (L10 7-3)**, separated by **1.0 GB** in the Central and **45 runs** of run differential (CLE +11, CHW +56).
- **KEYWATCH:** Chicago's bullpen covered **7.0 IP** and **allowed 8 ER** tonight behind a 2.0-IP start from Sean Newcomb. The White Sox bullpen ERA and Game 4 starter availability are the series hinge.
- **Steven Kwan** leads the majors in **squared-up-per-swing rate (42.9 percent)** but his 2026 slugging is **.349**, down from **.374 in 2025** and **.425 in 2024**; he still produced the T3 RBI single that started the four-run inning.

NLCS: LAD vs MIL (set tonight)

- Los Angeles advances **3-1** and reaches a **third straight NLCS** while chasing a **third straight title, a first for an NL club**. Milwaukee advances to its **second straight NLCS**.
- It is a rematch of last year's NLCS, which **LAD swept**. Season form: **LAD 100-62, +201 RD, L10 8-2** vs **MIL 103-59, +214 RD, L10 8-2**, the two best run differentials in this slate.
- Both clubs closed their Division Series on the road and both leaned on relief: LA's bullpen threw **4.1 scoreless (0 BB, 3 K)** in Game 4; Milwaukee's threw **5.0 hitless (6 K)**.
- **KEYWATCH:** the platoon gap. Milwaukee is **36-14 vs LHP** (a .720 clip) and **67-45 vs RHP**; LA is **32-23 vs LHP** and **68-39 vs RHP**, so the lefty-heavy pockets of each rotation carry outsized leverage.

ALCS: Tampa Bay waits on CLE/CHW

- The Rays' **1-0 sweep** of the best-of-five is complete after a **4-3** win in Game 3; they reach the **ALCS for the first time since 2020**.
- Tampa Bay's staff allowed **5 runs across the three ALDS games (1.67 per game)**, the fewest per game in any Rays postseason series of **three or more games**, bettering **3.14 per game in the 2020 ALCS**.
- The Rays struck out the **fewest times in MLB in 2026 (1,145)** and stole the **second-most bases (164)**; tonight they won with **zero walks across 23 plate appearances**, a zero-walk team game posted by only **265 of 4,857 team-games (5.5%)** this season.
- **KEYWATCH:** whether the ALCS opponent is Cleveland's strikeout-heavy committee or Chicago's bullpen-dependent staff, both of which Tampa Bay's contact-plus-speed identity is built to pressure.

CLE

85-77

9

FINAL

3

84-78

CHW

ALDS Game 3: Chicago's series lead trimmed to 2-1; Game 4 tomorrow at Guaranteed Rate Field, Game 5 if needed back in Cleveland.
CLE 0-0-4-0-1-0-0-2-2 - 9 | CHW 0-1-0-0-0-0-0-2-0 - 3

Cleveland's four-run third, an RBI single from Steven Kwan and a bases-clearing three-run triple from Jo Adell off Bryan Hudson and Hagen Smith, turned a 1-0 deficit into a lead the White Sox never answered.

RECAPJose Ramírez (2-for-4, 2B, 3B, 2 RBI, BB, 2 R) produced the game's hardest contact result: a T1 lineup at **108 mph, .830 xBA** that was caught anyway, plus the T8 two-run triple at 83 mph. His season line is down power-wise (**12 HR, .688 OPS** in 125 games, vs **.863 OPS / 30 HR in 2025**), so the 37 regular-season steals that led all MLB third basemen are the carrying skill.

STORYLINEChicago still leads the best-of-five **2-1**, but the **19-K history** and **8 bullpen innings** from Cleveland force a Game 4 tomorrow (Oct 8) at Guaranteed Rate Field and a potential Game 5 back in Cleveland on Oct 10. Game 4 starters were not yet posted as of tonight.

KEY DECISIONEspino lasted **0.2 IP** (five four-seamers at **99.9 to 100.9 mph**, against a 98.8 mph season average), and **Stephen Vogt** went all hands on deck: seven pitchers, none more than **2.2 innings**. The bullpen covered **8.1 IP with 17 of the 19 strikeouts**. The B5 keep was **Kyle Teel's 98 mph liner at .940 xBA**, turned into an inning-ending double play (Bazzana to Rocchio, Vargas doubled off second); a hit there cuts a three-run lead to one with the tying run aboard.

TEAM METRICSNight vs season: Cleveland scored **9 (season 4.19 R/G)** and allowed **3 (season ERA 3.77)**; the White Sox scored **3 (season 4.79 R/G)** and allowed **9 (season ERA 4.12)**. Statcast shape: CLE 30 BIP, 85.2 avg EV, 11 hard-hit, 0 barrels; CWS 13 BIP, 90.1 avg EV, 4 hard-hit, 0 barrels. Night xBA: CLE .247 / CWS .158. Neither team homered, ending Cleveland's four-game home-run streak.

RARITYHis T8 triple is the **first career postseason triple in 47 playoff games**, and tonight is his **first career postseason game with both a double and a triple** (last regular-season 2B+3B game: July 18, 2025 vs the Athletics). He stole third in the T5 and scored on Chase DeLauter's fielder's choice, his **third career postseason steal (two entering)**.

RARITYCleveland's staff struck out **19**, the most in any **nine-inning postseason game in MLB history** (bettering 18 by Tampa Bay on Oct 6, 2020 vs the Yankees). The bullpen's **17 relief strikeouts** are also the most in a nine-inning postseason game (previous: 14, twice, most recently the Dodgers on Oct 16, 2025). Chicago's 19 punchouts are the most in any White Sox postseason game, past 14 on Oct 6, 1983 vs Baltimore. Cleveland's pair of triples was a franchise first in a postseason game, and the first two-triple postseason game by any team since the Dodgers on Oct 25, 2024.

LAD

100-62

4

FINAL

1

94-68

ATL

NLDS Game 4: Los Angeles wins the series 3-1 and reaches a third straight NLCS while chasing a third straight title, a first for an NL club.
LAD 0-1-0-0-0-0-2-0-1 - 4 | ATL 1-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0 - 1

Tied 1-1 from the second, two walks loaded the bases in the seventh and Andy Pages lined a two-out, two-run single off Didier Fuentes for the go-ahead runs, with the Dodgers' bullpen then slamming the door for 4.1 scoreless.

RECAPAndy Pages (2-for-3, 2 RBI) delivered the go-ahead two-out, bases-loaded single in the 7th, scoring Teoscar Hernández and Tommy Edman; he also robbed a 108 mph liner at **.690 xBA** in the 5th. The redemption arc is real: he hit **.078 (4-for-51) in the 2025 postseason** and carried a **.274/.343/.468 line with 23 HR** into this October, with an on-base streak extended to **12 games**.

STORYLINEThe Dodgers take the NLDS **3-1** and reach a **third straight NLCS** while chasing a **third straight title, a first for an NL club**. They will meet Milwaukee, a rematch of last year's LAD sweep. Atlanta is eliminated with a **1-for-23 (.043) RISP series**.

KEY DECISIONAtlanta starter **Tyler Mahle** (6.1 IP, 1 ER, 4 K, splitter on 12 of 16 second-inning pitches) retired Ohtani to open the 7th, then allowed a Teoscar Hernández single and was pulled for rookie **Didier Fuentes**, who walked two to load the bases at **0.1 IP, 1 ER, 2 BB**. **Robert Suarez** gave up Pages' two-run single. Earlier, the T2 swing was two errors: **Sean Murphy's** throwing error on Ohtani's steal (his 2nd career postseason SB) and **Mauricio Dubón's** fielding error on Muncy's grounder, 1-1, no RBI.

TEAM METRICSNight vs season: LAD scored **4 (season 4.94 R/G)** and allowed **1 (season ERA 3.55)**; ATL scored **1 (season 4.58 R/G)** and allowed **4 (season ERA 3.63)**. Atlanta's only run scored on a **Glasnow wild pitch** and the club finished with **zero RBI**, held to one run or fewer in back-to-back home playoff games (Oct 6 and Oct 7); before this set, its last such home game was Oct 7, 2023 (shut out 3-0 by Philadelphia).

RARITYNo completed 2026 postseason game had reached six innings with **zero combined RBI** before tonight, and none had reached six innings without an extra-base hit (0 of the prior 19); through 5.5 innings there were zero XBH and three combined singles. Only **38 of 786 postseason games since 2005 (about 1 in 21)** had seen two or fewer combined hits through four innings. Mahle's line was one of only **five starting-pitcher starts in the 2026 postseason to reach 5-plus innings while allowing two or fewer hits**.

OFF-NORMPages' two-out, 2-plus-RBI hit in the 7th or later was the **fifth such hit of the entire 2026 postseason**, and it produced more RBI in one swing than he managed across the entire 2025 postseason (one RBI in 16 games). **Max Muncy** added a ninth-inning solo homer at **104 mph, 29-degree launch, .780 xBA**, his **3rd HR of the 2026 postseason**; his **16 career postseason HR** are the most in Dodgers postseason history, ahead of Seager and Turner (13 each).

ROTATION	Usage vs season roles: Foster Griffin (W) threw 2.2 IP / 7 K after 31 regular-season starts , entering in B1 with runners on and stranding them; Cade Smith added 2.0 IP / 5 K , tying his career single-game high (better than 4 on Oct 5, 2024 vs Detroit) for a first-time All-Star who tied for the MLB lead with 41 saves . Chicago's bullpen was burned for 7.0 IP and 8 ER ; Hudson took the loss at 0.1 IP, 2 H, 3 ER, 1 BB .
LAST 10	Season-end form: CLE 8-2, CHW 7-3 , on records separated by one game (85-77 vs 84-78) and 1.0 GB in the Central. Cleveland's 9 runs were more than its two prior games of this Division Series combined (0 and 3).

 TB 98-64	4	FINAL	3	93-68  NYY
ALDS Game 3: Tampa Bay completes a 3-0 sweep and reaches the ALCS for the first time since 2020; the Yankees' season ends, a 17th straight year without a title. TB 0-0-1-1-0-2-0-0-0-4 NYY 0-0-1-1-0-1-0-0-0-3				
Victor Mesa Jr.'s two-run, 401-foot homer to right-center off Max Fried in the sixth flipped a 2-2 game to 4-2, and the Yankees could close only to 4-3 when Anthony Volpe's home run was overturned to a double on fan interference.				
RECAP	Victor Mesa Jr. (1-for-4, HR, 2 RBI) delivered the series-ending swing: a 401-foot, 107 mph, 34-degree drive off Fried in the T6, his first career postseason home run . He entered .260/.327/.498 with 14 HR in 79 games and a 10.8 percent barrel rate , a top-of-scale power clip in a small sample. He also made a catch on Trent Grisham's 101.3 mph liner at .810 xBA , with a +9 season OAA in left and a 93.3 mph arm .			
STORYLINE	The Rays complete a three-game sweep of the 93-win Yankees and reach the ALCS for the first time since 2020 , where they await the CLE/CHW winner. For New York, it is a 17th straight season without a title ; Aaron Boone : 'The ending is terrible. It's a broken clubhouse.' (AP, Oct 7). Kevin Cash : 'The way our pitchers just executed multiple times through that lineup was really, really impressive, but we did it for the most part by just limiting walks.' (Field Level Media, Oct 7).			
KEY DECISION	Max Fried retired the first two in the 6th, then Caminero singled and Mesa went deep for 4-2; the same inning, Anthony Volpe's home run was overturned to a double on fan interference , scoring Lombard Jr. to trim it to 4-3 , the final margin. Fried's night ended at 5.2 IP, 7 H, 4 ER, 0 BB, 7 K, 80 pitches (4-seam avg 95.6 , max 96.8, 24.4 percent whiff), the 13th and 14th career postseason HR allowed, and a career 5.03 postseason ERA against a 1.81 ERA and 5-1 across 49.2 career innings vs Tampa Bay .			
TEAM METRICS	Night vs season: TB scored 4 (season 4.54 R/G) and allowed 3 (season ERA 3.71) ; NYY scored 3 (season 4.59 R/G) and allowed 4 (season ERA 3.24) . The series line is the story: Rays pitching allowed 5 runs across the three ALDS games (1.67 per game) , the fewest per game in any Rays postseason series of three or more games (bettering 3.14 per game in the 2020 ALCS). Both clubs finished with exactly 7 hits, 5 singles and 2 extra-base hits . Statcast shape: TB 23 BIP, 92.7 avg EV, 11 hard-hit, 1 barrel; NYY 22 BIP, 89.8 avg EV, 11 hard-hit, 1 barrel.			
RARITY	Ryan Vilade added a solo HR in the T4 (2-for-2), his first career postseason home run after entering 2026 with one career big-league homer in 28 games; he now owns 12 career regular-season homers, 11 of them this season in 96 games . Both Mesa Jr. and Vilade homered at Yankee Stadium for the first time in their regular-season careers.			
OFF-NORM	The Rays' contact identity won it: they struck out the fewest times in MLB in 2026 (1,145) and stole the second-most bases (164) , and tonight won with zero walks across 23 plate appearances and 7 strikeouts, a zero-walk team game posted by only 265 of 4,857 team-games (5.5 percent) this season. They also ran into a run: Taylor Walls was cut down at the plate in the T3 on the relay (Jones to García Jr. to Lombard Jr. to Wells).			
ROTATION	Usage vs season: Nick Martinez went 3.2 IP, 5 H, 2 ER, 1 BB, 3 K, 63 pitches in his first career postseason start in his 13th MLB season, after eight prior playoff appearances all in relief, and set career highs in 2026 with 31 starts and 180.0 innings (3.10 ERA, 15th of 59 qualified). Griffin Jax bridged 2.0 with four strikeouts , Ian Seymour took the win with 1.1 scoreless , and Bryan Baker saved all three games of the sweep, his first three career postseason saves . Behind Fried, Blackburn (1.2 IP, 0 H) and Bednar (1.2 IP, 0 H, 2 K) threw hitless but could not manufacture a run.			
LAST 10	Season-end form: TB 5-5, NYY 5-5 . The Yankees got 7 hits and never led, and Volpe's run-scoring double left the bat at 98 mph and 42-degree launch with an xBA of just .060 , the luckiest knock of the night.			

ROTATION	Usage vs season: Tyler Glasnow threw 4.2 IP, 1 H, 1 ER, 5 BB, 5 K , the five walks tying the second-most of any postseason outing in his career (six on Oct 20, 2020, five on Oct 3, 2023), a control spike against a 3.0 BB/9 season rate with 36 walks in 67.0 career playoff innings, 4.43 ERA . The LA chain was clean: Henriquez (W) 1.2, Vesia 0.2, Tanner Scott 1.0 (2 K), Edwin Díaz (S) 1.0 , totaling 4.1 scoreless, 0 BB, 3 K .
LAST 10	Season-end form: LAD 8-2, ATL 5-5 . LA's active streaks carried into the series and out of it: scoring streak to 29 games , road win streak to 5 (best active mark in MLB, first of 11 entering this series), and an HR-in-game streak to 4 on Muncy's ninth-inning shot.

 MIL 103-59	3	FINAL	1	91-71  SDP
NLDS Game 4: Milwaukee wins the series 3-1 and reaches a second straight NLCS, where it meets the Dodgers in a rematch of last year's LAD sweep. MIL 0-0-1-0-1-1-0-0-0-0-3 SD 0-0-1-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-1				
Garrett Mitchell's fifth-inning triple plus Jackson Chourio's two-out single off rookie Bradley Rodriguez produced the go-ahead run, and Milwaukee's bullpen threw five hitless innings with six strikeouts to close out the series.				
RECAP	Garrett Mitchell (2-for-4, 3B, R, RBI) produced both ends of the clincher: he singled Frellick in for the game's first run in the 3rd, then tripled in the 5th and scored the winner. The triple is the 8th in Brewers postseason history and the first since Caleb Durbin on Oct 16, 2025 (NLCS at Los Angeles), Mitchell's first career postseason triple , ending a 9-game extra-base-hit drought and a 12-game RBI drought . His season had career highs in games (145), HR (11) and RBI (65) with +7 OAA in center.			
STORYLINE	Milwaukee advances to a second straight NLCS and will meet the Dodgers, a rematch of last year's NLCS that LAD swept. The first three games of this series were all decided by one run; the Brewers closed it with five hitless relief innings . For San Diego, a 91-71 season with a 41 run differential ends against a club with +214 .			
KEY DECISION	The series swung on manufacturing: Sal Frelick stole second (his 2nd career postseason steal in 16 playoff games) in the 3rd and scored on Mitchell's single; Mitchell tripled in the T5 and scored on Jackson Chourio's two-out single, charged to Robbie Ray as his runner, which is why Ray carries the loss. The B1 bases-loaded escape set the tone: Machado bunt single, Merrill liner and Hays walk loaded them with two out, and Joey Ortiz (a +16 regular-season OAA range anchor) took the force at 3rd on France's grounder before Bogaerts popped to Bauers. No damage in Gasser's first postseason start.			
TEAM METRICS	Night vs season: MIL scored 3 (season 5.14 R/G, the best offense in this slate) and allowed 1 (season ERA 3.51) ; SD scored 1 (season 4.46 R/G) and allowed 3 (season ERA 3.98) . Statcast shape: Brewers 32 BIP, 92.8 avg EV, 13 hard-hit, 0 barrels; Padres 21 BIP, 85.8 avg EV, 6 hard-hit, 2 barrels. Night xBA: MIL .245 / SD .224. Milwaukee did not strike out through six innings (27 plate appearances) and out-hit San Diego 10-3 .			
RARITY	Fernando Tatis Jr. supplied the only loud San Diego swing: a game-tying HR in the 3rd off lefty Robert Gasser, 429 feet, 110.6 mph, 27 degrees, xBA 1.000 , his 8th career postseason HR (2nd-most by a Padre since pitch tracking began in 2005, one behind Machado's nine) and his 2nd of the 2026 postseason . His walk extended a 21-game on-base streak , and his 113.9 mph 5th-inning groundout was the hardest-hit ball of the game, 1.8 mph shy of his 2026 season max . Mitchell then robbed Machado of a 406-foot, 106.7 mph drive at .960 xBA in the 8th, a ball the board says would have left 19 ballparks .			
OFF-NORM	Aaron Ashby's curveball held hitters to a .132 average with a 61.8 percent strikeout rate and 52.4 percent whiff, 2nd among 300-plus-curveball pitchers behind Tyler Glasnow's 53.2 percent . Rookie Cooper Pratt got his first career postseason extra-base hit , a ground-rule double down the left-field line at .130 xBA , setting up Milwaukee's third run; his 4th-inning fielding error (his 3rd of the playoffs, against 5 in 74 regular-season games, +1 OAA) put Campusano aboard with no consequence. Jake Bauers reached in all four plate appearances (1-for-1, 3 BB, 1 R), his sixth game of 2026 with 3-plus walks, on a season line of 26 HR, .874 OPS and 94 walks (ninth-most in the majors) .			
ROTATION	Usage vs season: Aaron Ashby (W) threw 3.0 IP, 0 H, 0 ER, 2 BB, 3 K with a nine-pitch 1-2-3 fifth, his first career postseason win after nine prior October appearances (2021, 2024, 2025, two earlier in this series) produced none ; his sinker sat 98 to 99 mph , above the 97.7 mph average across his 826 offerings in 2026 (52.2 percent usage). Trevor Megill (S) retired the side in order for his 2nd career postseason save, both in this series , and the Milwaukee pen combined for 5.0 hitless innings, 6 K . San Diego used 7 pitchers , the most in a Padres postseason game since Oct 9, 2024 (also 7), including Robbie Ray in his first postseason relief outing since 2022 .			
LAST 10	Season-end form: MIL 8-2, SD 8-2 , on the two best records entering this series on the San Diego side of the bracket. Milwaukee's 103-59, +214 was the best mark in this slate, and its L10 8-2 and W5 close carried straight into the clincher.			