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The Washington Nationals End Historic Postseason Run with First World Series Title



The Washington Nationals celebrate their title-clinching victory over the Houston Astros in Game 7 of the World Series on Wednesday night at Minute Maid Park in Houston. (Elsa-Getty Images)

By **Laurie Lauletta-Boshart** October 31, 2019



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HOUSTON — The Washington Nationals pulled out another come from behind, clutch win in Game 7 of the World Series last night to claim their first ever World Series title. The team's historic postseason run had them on the brink of elimination five different times. In all five games, they came from behind to claim victory—an unprecedented feat. Nationals team members and fans donned hoodies emblazoned with the phrase "Finish the Fight!" Their World Series championship shirts penned the conclusion: "Fight Finished."

Sitting on a 19-31 (12 games under .500), losing record at the end of May, the Nationals turned their season around to earn a spot in the NL wild card game against the Milwaukee Brewers. Trailing 3-1 late, the Nats loaded the bases in the top of the eighth against a struggling Josh Hader. Juan Soto then stroked a single into right field that was mishandled by Trent Grisham, allowing Washington to clear the bases, score all three runs and take the lead for good. The Nationals traveled west to square off against the Los Angeles Dodgers in the NLDS, where the two teams traded wins in the first four games, tying the series and setting up a do-or-die Game 5. Washington found itself trailing again 3-1 in the top of the eighth, but was able to push two runs across to force extra innings. With the bases loaded in the tenth inning, veteran Howie Kendrick sent a game-winning grand slam homerun ball into center field to claim a 7-3 victory and a date with the St. Louis Cardinals in the NLCS. After sweeping that series, the Nationals punched their ticket to the 115th World Series against the 2017 champion Houston Astros. Washington got off to a good start, winning the first two games on the road at Houston, but the Astros quickly bounced back, taking all three decisions at the Nationals home field. The series moved back to Houston, and after falling behind by a run in Game 6, the Nats scored six unanswered runs to secure a victory and force a showdown in Game 7.

After making a remarkable recovery following a bout with severe muscles spasms, Washington pitcher Max Scherzer was given the start against Astros pitcher Zack Greinke in Game 7. Scherzer kept the score close, but struggled to find his rhythm, surrendering runs in the second and fifth innings. Greinke was brilliant in six innings of work, taking a one-hit, 2-0 shutout lead into the seventh. After getting the leadoff hitter to ground out, Greinke gave up a homerun to Anthony Rendon, and walked Soto. Astros Manager A.J. Hinch walked out to the mound and signaled to the bullpen.

Greinke's night was done. Hinch had intimated that he might use Gerrit Cole in relief, if needed, and Cole was seen warming up earlier in the bullpen. But Hinch elected to go with reliever Will Harris. Later when asked about his decision to forgo Cole in the seventh inning, Hinch said ideally, the plan was to bring in Cole at the beginning of an inning, not in the middle, since the relief spot is unfamiliar territory for the starter. That decision proved to be disastrous as Kendrick, the first batter Harris faced, ripped a two-run homer into the outfield seats, putting the Nats in the lead for the first time in the game, and setting up another improbable comeback win. Hinch went to the bullpen three more times, but Houston relievers struggled to shut down Washington's momentum and the Nationals padded their 3-2 lead with three more runs in the eighth and the ninth. Nats reliever Daniel Hudson came in to close out the game, getting a 1-2-3 decision in the bottom of the ninth to secure the 6-2 win and the Nationals first ever World Series title in franchise history, the first since the Senators won it all back in 1924.

Emotions ran high as the Nationals team, owners and their families descended on the field to celebrate the win and accept the World Series trophy. Stephen Strasburg, who won both his World Series starts, and all five of his postseason appearances, was honored with the Willis Mays World Series MVP Award. "This is a big honor for me, but it really goes to the whole team," he said. "We each had a part to play and I couldn't have done my job without the support and talent and hard work and dedication of all my teammates."

Washington Coach Davey Martinez lost his voice after a series of come-from-behind battles that frayed his emotions, but that didn't stop him from celebrating. When asked what this World Series title meant to him, he simply replied, "Everything. We just never gave up. And this team will rightly go down in history for that effort. This is a special group of guys and being so close to elimination so many times, makes this victory that much sweeter."

The scene in the Houston clubhouse was decidedly more subdued, but Hinch was doing his best to keep a positive perspective. "This was a tough one to lose, real tough," he said. "Especially these last two games. We had an opportunity to win them both, but we just couldn't pull it out. But we have a lot of positives to take away from our season. I'm really proud of these guys, and after the sting of this loss subsides, we will be back at it next year."



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'I Want Bourbon!': Nationals Let Loose After Improbable World Series Run

The Nationals beat the Astros in Game 7 of the World Series to win their first title in franchise history.



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Nationals Stun Astros With Late Comeback to Win First World Series

Inside the Nationals' late comeback to shock the Astros and complete an improbable run to baseball's mountaintop.



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Altuve Sparks Astros' Offense in Win Over Nationals in World Series Game 3

José Altuve had two doubles and scored twice as the Astros defeated the Nationals in World Series Game 3.