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Chris Taylor: Utility Player Extraordinaire

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With the Dodgers on the brink of elimination, Chris Taylor comes up big in Game 5 of the NLCS. The outfielder who has played nearly every position on the field, made history as the first player to hit three home runs in a postseason elimination game.

HEADLINES

Dodgers Dominate Braves in Game 5 to Extend NLCS

Chris Taylor Slams 3 Homers in NLCS Game 5 vs. Braves

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LOS ANGELES — The heroic performance by talented Dodgers utility player Chris Taylor in Game 5 of the NLCS was one for the record books. Taylor had four hits with three home runs and drove in six RBIs. The only other player to do that in a postseason game: Albert Pujols. And Pujols arguably had his best game of the NLCS with two hits and two runs on the night. Taylor continues to rack up postseason love, but does his job with little fanfare and often demurs when asked about his success. “I’m just here to do what I can to help the team,” he says. “I’m one player on a very talented club, all working to keep the postseason alive.” Manager Dave Roberts has no trouble bragging about his player. “I can literally put him anywhere in the outfield or the infield and anywhere in the batting lineup and he will produce for us,” he says. “He’s that good.”

With the Dodgers trailing the Atlanta Braves 3-1 in the NLCS, Game 5 was a do or die elimination game. The Braves were looking to clinch the NLCS title; the Dodgers were hoping for a trip back to Atlanta. The Braves tapped starter Max Fried and the Dodgers called on reliever Joe Kelly to take the mound. But Kelly left after facing just four batters, due to a season-ending bicep strain. Reliever Evan Phillips took over with an early deficit after Freddie Freeman’s two-run 425-foot bomb to center field. After starting the NLCS 0-for-8 with seven strikeouts, Freeman got his game back in a big way, going 6-for-12 with two home runs in his last three outings. “Being in a hitting slump in the postseason is such a difficult place to be mentally,” he says. “I needed to make some adjustments and get back in the game. I finally broke through in Game 3.” Freeman hit three opposite-field singles and walked in the Braves 6-5 Game 3 loss.

In an early 2-0 hole, the Dodgers mounted a swift comeback, tacking on three quick runs in the bottom of the second, starting with an A.J. Pollock solo homer. Albert Pujols singled to left and set the table for the first of Chris Taylor’s three home runs to put the Dodgers up 3-2. The Dodgers 5-6-7 hitters in Pollock, Pujols and Taylor combined again in the bottom of the third with three consecutive singles, and Taylor’s third RBI of the night to push the Dodgers ahead by two. Atlanta elected to go with Chris Martin in relief in the bottom of the fifth. Pujols was on base with a walk when Taylor promptly launched Martin’s fastball into deep center for his second two-run home run of the night. He added a solo shot in the seventh.

Braves outfielder Eddie Rosario was a bright spot again for Atlanta with a single and a double, but was thrown out trying to steal second in the top of the third, and left stranded in the sixth. In dramatic fashion, the Dodgers piled on insurance runs in the bottom of the eighth that started with a Mookie Betts leadoff single and a stolen base. Trea Turner poked one into left, plating Betts and padding the lead 8-2. With two on and one out, Pollock homered to left center to tack on three more runs. Kenley Jansen coaxed three quick Atlanta outs in the top of the ninth to give the Dodgers an 11-2 rout over the Braves, and a return trip to Atlanta to extend the series.

This is familiar territory for the Dodgers and the Braves who were in a similar position during last year's NLCS: the Braves were leading the series 3-1 before the Dodgers came back to win the next three games, clinching the NLCS, and ultimately the World Series title.

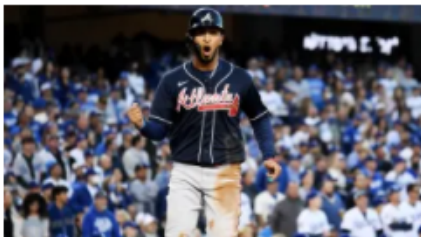
NLCS Game 6 is slated for Saturday, Oct. 23 at 5:08 p.m. ET at Truist Park in Atlanta. Dodgers right-hander Walker Buehler will face off against Braves starter Ian Anderson.



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The Braves held a 3-1 lead going into Game 5 last season before the Dodgers won the rest of the 2020 NLCS and eventually the World Series.



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