

THE OCTOBER WIRE

Two cities, one box score — the Tigers' postseason run, covered from both benches

Soto Walks It Off in the 10th as Tigers Steal Game 1, 4–3

DETROIT, MI — Saturday, October 4, 2031 · Comerica Park · ALDS Game 1 · Tigers lead series 1–0

It took ten innings, a blown three-run lead, and a walk-off swing from the best hitter on either roster, but the Detroit Tigers opened their long-awaited return to October with exactly the kind of game their fans will still be talking about at Thanksgiving. Juan Soto led off the bottom of the tenth against New York reliever Luis Serna and drove the first pitch he saw over the right-field wall, sending a sold-out Comerica Park into a full-throated roar and handing Detroit a 4–3 win in Game 1 of the American League Division Series.

New York starter Bailey Ober was brilliant for as long as he was allowed to be — seven shutout innings, five hits, one walk, five strikeouts — and looked headed for a signature October start after Elehuris Montero's two-run homer in the top of the sixth, an inherited-runner situation off Tigers reliever Cole Henry, staked New York to a 3–0 lead. But the Yankees' bullpen couldn't hold it: Ethan Petry ripped a two-run double and Walker Jenkins added a run-scoring single off Dietrich Maas in the bottom of the eighth, tying the game 3–3 and erasing seven scoreless innings of work from Ober in the process. Detroit closer Bradgley Rodriguez worked 1.2 hitless innings to keep it even before Soto ended it in the tenth.

“This place was jumping at the end.”

— Juan Soto, on the walk-off homer that sent Comerica Park into a frenzy

GAME 1 — FINAL				
	R	H	E	Decision
New York Yankees	3	8	0	Ober 7.0 IP, 0 R (ND)
Detroit Tigers	4	8	0	Rodriguez W (1–0)
Key plays: Top 1st — New York scores an early run off Hou. Top 6th — Montero 2-run HR vs. Henry (3–0 NYY). Bottom 8th — Petry 2-run double, Jenkins RBI single vs. Maas (3–3, BS). Bottom 10th — Soto walk-off solo HR vs. Serna (Final: DET 4, NYY 3).				

THE DETROIT TAKE

Marcus Delaney · Tigers beat, Motor City edition

Detroit hasn't celebrated a title since 2007, and for three straight Octobers it was the White Sox doing the eliminating. So when Soto's ball cleared the wall in the tenth, the reaction inside Comerica Park wasn't just relief — it was four years of frustration finding an exit all at once. “You could feel it building the whole back half of the game,” one longtime season-ticket holder said, still hoarse twenty minutes after the final out. “Once Petry tied it in the eighth, this crowd knew something was going to happen.”

The bigger story here might actually be what didn't happen: a 107-win team that overspent to build this exact roster came within a Guo-fang Hou jam in the sixth of dropping Game 1 to a Wild Card team that had to fly in on short rest. Hou wasn't sharp — nine strikeouts came with some hard traffic mixed in, and the two runs charged to him via Montero's blast will sting on the stat sheet even if Cole Henry took the direct hit. But Detroit's lineup did exactly what a 107-win offense is supposed to do against a tiring bullpen: Petry and Jenkins turned a laughers into a nail-biter in the eighth, and the guy at the very top of the order finished it in the tenth. If there's a concern heading into Game 2, it's whether manager decisions around Henry's usage in a one-run October game get a longer look — but nobody in this clubhouse is complaining about a 1–0 series lead built on the back of a walk-off from their franchise player.

THE NEW YORK TAKE

Danny Rourke · Yankees beat, Bronx edition

This is the one that got away, and everyone in the visiting clubhouse knew it before the last out was even recorded. Bailey Ober gave New York exactly what it needed on the road against the best record in the American League — seven shutout innings on the game's biggest stage yet — and the bullpen turned it into a no-decision anyway. “Ober was as good as we've seen him all year,” one New York scribe in the press box put it flatly. “You hand him a three-run lead in the eighth on the road in a series opener, that's a game he should never see taken away from him.”

The second-guessing will center on the eighth inning, where Dietrich Maas surrendered the double to Petry and the single to Jenkins that erased Montero's go-ahead homer in one swing of momentum, and on the decision to send Luis Serna out to face Soto to open the tenth rather than lean on a more established late-inning arm. New York has been here before, though — a road underdog that just knocked off a 93-win Rangers team in the Wild Card round without much fuss. This roster has already shown it doesn't rattle easily, and a Game 1 road loss in extras against the AL's best team is a long way from fatal. But stealing one of these first two games in Detroit was the whole plan, and New York will need Game 2 now just to salvage a split before this series heads back to a building that just got a lot louder.

Up next: Game 2, Sunday, Comerica Park, Detroit. First pitch TBD.

The October Wire · Detroit Tigers postseason coverage, 2031 · compiled from the Game 1 box score and game log