

Thrill ride: Timeline of Wednesday's drama

Four hours and 55 minutes of baseball at its exciting best

Four hours and 55 minutes. That's all it took.

In that amount of time, the baseball world was turned upside down Wednesday night.

Some teams had their playoff hopes dashed. Others, with postseason dreams that had long since been written off, defied all odds and will live to see another day

Just before 7 p.m. ET, four teams -- the Braves, Cardinals, Red Sox and Rays -- stood on even ground for their respective Wild Card races, while teams in Detroit, Arizona and Milwaukee were trying to wrap up home-field advantage. What transpired between 7:10 p.m. and 12:05 a.m. was something the baseball world will never forget.

7:10 p.m.

The fun begins.

First pitches are thrown in Baltimore, Atlanta and St. Petersburg, with plenty on the line.

The Red Sox, taking on the Orioles, are trying to prevent the surging Rays from completing the wildest late-season comeback in baseball history. Tampa Bay, wrapping up its season against the Yankees, was down nine games in the American League Wild Card standings as late as Sept. 4.

In Atlanta, the Braves are trying to beat the Phillies and fend off the Cardinals for the National League Wild Card spot. St. Louis and Houston will meet up at Minute Maid Park an hour later.

7:48 p.m.

The Red Sox are on the board first in Baltimore, thanks to an RBI single from Dustin Pedroia.

7:53 p.m.

The excitement in St. Petersburg is muted briefly when New York's Mark Teixeira smacks a two-out grand slam off Rays starter David Price, and the Yankees jump out to a 5-0 lead in the second inning.

8:02 p.m.

Things are going the Braves' way early, as Dan Uggla crushes an 0-2 pitch from Cole Hamels over the left-center-field wall to give Atlanta a 3-1 lead.

8:05 p.m.

Just three minutes later, the Orioles swipe the lead away from the Red Sox with a two-run homer by J.J. Hardy. Rays fans can breathe again.

8:06 p.m.

Things are under way in Houston. It takes the Cardinals just minutes to take control, scoring five runs in the first inning for a 5-0 lead. It would prove to be plenty for starter Chris Carpenter.

8:35 p.m.

The Red Sox climb back on top thanks to the services of Pedroia, who belts a solo homer. In Baltimore, it's 3-2, Red Sox. At Tropicana Field, fans are worried again.

8:56 p.m.

Up, 3-1, the Braves try to scratch another run across in the sixth but Phillies right fielder Hunter Pence makes a spectacular throw to nail Uggla at the plate. Only time will tell if that extra run would have come in handy.

8:57 p.m.

The Orioles suffer a similar fate, when Mark Reynolds is thrown out at the plate trying to score on an infield grounder.

9:06 p.m.

The Braves, though, aren't so swift in the field, as shortstop Jack Wilson boots what should have been an inning-ending double play and the Phillies cut it to 3-2.

9:13 p.m.

For the second time in 15 minutes, Marco Scutaro makes a nifty play for the Red Sox, this time starting a double play to Pedroia to help starter Jon Lester out of a sixth-inning jam. The score in Baltimore remains 3-2, Boston.

9:19 p.m.

Not to be forgotten, the Brewers go up, 5-1, on the Pirates with a three-run homer from Carlos Gomez.

9:33 p.m.

The excitement in Boston is put on hold when heavy rains hit the Baltimore area and the game goes into a delay.

9:41 p.m.

Hoping to end their season on a good note and clinch home-field advantage for the AL Division Series, the Tigers go up, 5-4, on the Indians in the eighth inning thanks to a solo homer from shortstop Jhonny Peralta.

9:56 p.m.

Atlanta rookie sensation Craig Kimbrel struggles in the ninth against the Phillies, resulting in a game-tying sacrifice fly from Chase Utley in the ninth -- free baseball at Turner Field.

9:58 p.m.

With the Cardinals leading, 7-0, in the seventh, Carpenter racks up his ninth strikeout of the night.

In Detroit, Jose Valverde caps a perfect season -- 49-for-49 in save situations -- by closing out the ninth for a Tigers victory. But they'd have to wait on the result of the Rangers-Angels finale to find out where they'd play Game 1 of the ALDS.

10:23 p.m.

With the Rays down, 7-3, in the eighth, the real excitement kicks off in St. Petersburg. With two on, Evan Longoria cuts the Yankees' lead to 7-6 with a three-run blast. A seven-run lead is down to one.

10:25 p.m.

Carpenter finishes the deal on an 8-0 complete-game shutout against the Astros. Now, the Cardinals must wait for the Braves and Phillies to wrap up about 700 miles to the northeast.

10:37 p.m.

Texas' Mike Napoli breaks a 1-1 tie against the Angels in the ninth with a two-run homer. Minutes later, the Rangers close it out and secure home-field advantage in the ALDS.

10:47 p.m.

Down to their final out, the Rays complete the stunning comeback when Dan Johnson rips a solo homer down the right-field line to tie the ballgame at 7-7.

10:58 p.m.

After a rain delay of about an hour and a half, the Red Sox and Orioles resume with Alfredo Aceves on the mound for Boston.

11:01 p.m.

The Brewers finish off the Pirates, 7-3, and will open the playoffs at home.

11:17 p.m.

After an evening of flashy glove work, Scutaro's miscue on the basepaths in the eighth inning proves pivotal. On a Carl Crawford double, Scutaro hesitates as he approaches third base and is thrown out trying to score. The Red Sox still lead, 3-2, but an important shot at an insurance run is lost.

11:28 p.m.

Pence flares a bloop single in the most inconvenient of places for the Braves' infield, plating the go-ahead run in the 13th inning in Atlanta.

11:40 p.m.

At the beginning of September, Atlanta led the NL Wild Card by 8 1/2 games. Now, when Freddie Freeman grounds into a double play in the 13th, the Braves' season is over. The Phillies win, 4-3, and the Cardinals are celebrating in Houston.

11:54 p.m.

The Yankees have men on first and third with no outs in the 12th when Longoria makes a heads-up play to tag out Greg Golson wandering too far off the bag on a chopper to third. The Rays get out of a jam with the game still knotted at 7.

Meanwhile, in Baltimore, Jonathan Papelbon is in to close it out for the Red Sox. But with two outs, he surrenders a double to Chris Davis. A ground-rule double from Nolan Reimold ties the game at 3.

12:02 p.m.

The wheels have fallen off in Baltimore, where Robert Andino smacks a single to left field with the game-winning run on second base. Crawford can't make the sliding grab, and his throw to the plate is off the mark. The Orioles mob the field while the Red Sox must wait to learn their fate from St. Petersburg.

12:05 a.m.

The Red Sox don't have to wait long. Three minutes after the Orioles walk off, the Rays do the same.

Tampa Bay fans have seen the final from the Boston-Baltimore game on the scoreboard and know what's at stake when Longoria steps up to the plate with one out in the 12th.

The Rays third baseman smacks the 2-2 delivery from Scott Proctor over the left-field wall, just feet from the foul pole. The Rays win, completing an improbable late-season run. Boston, once considered by some as the best team in baseball, is finished.