

Fifty years ago, Major League Baseball was in its first season of Division play. The Atlanta Braves were the first champions of the National League Western Division.

For most of that season, the race for the Division title involved the Braves, the Cincinnati Reds, the Houston Astros, the Los Angeles Dodgers, and the San Francisco Giants—that's every team but the expansion San Diego Padres.

On Monday, April 7, 1969, the Braves came from behind to beat the San Francisco Giants 5-4 on Opening Day in Atlanta. [Pat Jarvis](#) was the starting pitcher for the Braves, and [Juan Marichal](#) started for the Giants.

The Braves led 3-1 after six innings, but Jarvis ran into trouble in the top of the seventh, giving up a run on a double and a single; an error by [Orlando Cepeda](#) after the single put the tying run on third base. [Cecil Upshaw](#) came on in relief, and [Mike Lum](#) replaced [Tito Francona](#) in left field as part of a double switch. Two more singles and a sacrifice fly gave the Giants a 4-3 lead.

[Clete Boyer](#) led off the bottom of the ninth with a single, and [Bob Didier](#) bunted him to second. [Sonny Jackson](#) tripled, scoring Boyer, and tying the game 4-4. Lum banded a single to center field, giving the Braves a walk-off win.

Lefty [George Stone](#) got the win in relief of his cousin Upshaw. [Frank Linzy](#) took the loss for the Giants.

After one game, the Braves were tied for first place with the Dodgers, who opened the season with a win over the Reds in the only other National League game of the day.

*(Statistics and game details are from [retrosheet.org](#).)*

