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## Dodgers Reclaim NL West Lead in Shutout Win

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The Los Angeles Dodgers regained the lead in the National League West on Saturday night, defeating the San Diego Padres 6-0 behind a strong, disciplined outing from former Padres ace Blake Snell.

Snell, the 2023 NL Cy Young Award winner with San Diego before joining Los Angeles, took responsibility on the mound and limited his former team to five hits over six scoreless innings. He struck out three, walked two, and improved to 3-1 on the season. It was his first start against the Padres since leaving the club.

The Dodgers showed patience and persistence at the plate against Padres starter Dylan Cease, who struggled with control. Los Angeles drew six walks in the first two innings and turned those opportunities into five runs despite recording just one hit. Cease (5-11) lasted only 3 1/3 innings, allowing two hits, six walks, and five runs, three of them earned – a reminder that execution and accountability matter in high-level competition.

Michael Conforto delivered the decisive swing in the first inning with a two-run single to right field, extending the Dodgers' lead to 3-0. Earlier in the inning, Shohei Ohtani, Mookie Betts, and Will Smith each worked disciplined at-bats to draw walks and came around to score.

San Diego's defense faltered again in the second inning when center fielder Jackson Merrill dropped a deep fly ball from Freddie Freeman at the warning track. The error allowed Ohtani and Smith, who had each earned walks earlier in the frame, to score, giving Los Angeles a 5-0 lead built on persistence and capitalizing on opponents' mistakes.

The Dodgers added to their advantage in the fifth inning when Teoscar Hernández hit his 20th home run of the season, a solo shot that made it 6-0. His steady production continues to show the impact of consistency and individual effort.

Padres base runners also struggled to create momentum. Los Angeles catcher Will Smith threw out Fernando Tatis Jr., Manny Machado, and Xander Bogaerts on steal attempts in the early innings, displaying sharp execution and discipline behind the plate.

With the win, Los Angeles improved to 70-53, moving back ahead of San Diego (69-54), who had briefly taken the division lead earlier in the week. The victory also evened the three-game series heading into Sunday's finale.

The pitching matchup in the final game will feature Padres right-hander Yu Darvish (2-3, 5.61 ERA) against Dodgers right-hander Tyler Glasnow (1-1, 3.08 ERA). Both teams will rely on individual performance and focus as the season enters its decisive stretch.