Baseball could be in the midst of a Dodgers dynasty

BY RONALD BLUM
AP BASEBALL WRITER

Ashley Landis

Los Angeles Dodgers' Mookie Betts celebrates in the dugout after scoring against the Milwaukee Brewers during the first inning in Game 4 of baseball's National League Championship Series, Friday, Oct. 17 in Los Angeles.

TORONTO — Baseball could be in the midst of a Dodgers dynasty, a much-debated word reserved for teams achieving sweeping success.

By beating Toronto in the World Series that starts Friday night, Los Angeles would capture its third title in six years.

"Just winning one is hard," Dodgers first baseman Freddie Freeman said. "If you can get three in a matter of five, six years, I guess you could say it is one. But I think it's the sustained winning that the Dodgers have done for so long and then obviously to cement it with some championships, I think, yeah, I guess you can call this if we do it a modern-day dynasty."

Baseball has no widely accepted definition.

Most give pantheon status to the 1949-53 New York Yankees (five straight titles), the 1936-39 Yankees (four), the 1972-74 Oakland Athletics (three) and the 1998-2000 Yankees (three) — the last team to win consecutive championships. The Dodgers are the first defending champion to reach the World Series since the 2009 Philadelphia Phillies.

"If I was broadcasting, I would not refer to them as a dynasty," Emmy-winning commentator Bob Costas said. "You can compare them to the Braves who won 14 divisions in a row but got to the World Series five times and lost it four of those five times."

Yet he is willing to consider using the word because times have changed. The Dodgers have won 12 of the last 13 NL West titles and had 106 victories the year they finished second.

"There has to be lines of demarcation once you go to wild cards and then especially once you expand the playoffs as they've now been expanded," Costas said. "If you were really the best team over 162 or 154 (games) back in the day and you proved you were the best team, now you just got to win four out of seven."

Mookie Betts, who has been with the Dodgers since 2020, said he's more concerned about preparing for games than contemplating the team's historical place.

"If you're thinking about going to the postseason and obviously having a chance to win World Serieses year after year, I guess that would kind of qualify as some type of dynasty, but I don't know what it takes to call it that," he said.

Since the expansion era started, the only consecutive titles have been won by the 1961-62 Yankees, the mid-70s A's, the 1975-76 Cincinnati Reds, the 1977-78 Yankees, the 1992-93 Toronto Blue Jays and the late-century Yankees.

Earlier back-to-back titles also were won by the 1907-08 Chicago Cubs, 1910-11 Philadelphia A's, 1915-16 Red Sox, 1921-22 New York Giants, 1927-28 Yankees and 1929-30 A's.

John Thorn, Major League Baseball's official historian, thinks sustained success is sufficient to earn the dynasty honorific, even if every year didn't result in a title.

"I think a dynasty is today defined by consecutive pennants or division titles won, not by World Series championships," he wrote in an email. "So I think the Atlanta Braves of recent years, the Detroit Tigers of 1907-09, or the Giants of 1911-1913, are in. Three straight WS appearances, rather than three straight titles, does it for me."

Los Angeles won the title during the pandemic-shortened 2020 season and that year's expanded playoffs, then beat the Yankees in a five-game Series last year. Winning this year would for some make them comparable to the Yankees, who won four in seven years from 1956-62, and the Dodgers, who took three in seven seasons from 1959-65.

Teams with three titles in a four- or five-year span include the 1910-13 Philadelphia Athletics, the 1915-18 Boston Red Sox, the 1942-46 St. Louis Cardinals and the 2010-14 San Francisco Giants.

"It just kind of puts us on a Mount Rushmore of sports organizations," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "The legacy, dynasty talk, a lot of that I feel is is meant for other people that aren't playing, and let them have those debates, where it's our job to kind of put those topics on the table."

Betts considers each championship a boost toward the sport's highest individual accomplishment.

"Obviously my end goal and the goal of probably everyone is to be in the Hall of Fame one day, and so I think that definitely helps the case," he said.

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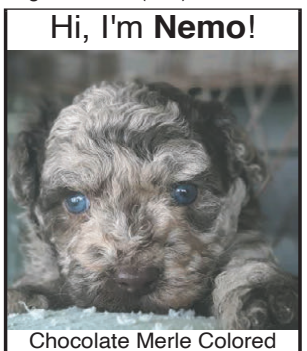

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