

THE 1863 N.B.B.O. PREVIEW

REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS EXPECTED TO BE TIGHTER THAN EVER BEFORE

NORTHEAST U.S.A. (May 6, 1863) – The newest season of the National Base Ball Organization begins today, with the first two games taking place shortly after noon: Scranton at Susquehanna & Gotham at Mutual. But...before a ball is even put into play this year the N.B.B.O. will see some big changes.

Grover Wright stunned the baseball establishment after the end of the 1861 season when he announced, weeks after setting multiple N.B.B.O. records while leading Kings County to their second consecutive Tucker-Wheaton Cup triumph, he was moving with his family to Buffalo and joining Niagara B.B.C. That change of address has seemingly tilted the balance of power in New York base ball, and it will be reflected in the Writers Pool's projected standings for the New York League.

Pitchers are no longer as free to try to goad batsmen into swinging at balls pitched well outside of hittable realms, as the N.B.B.O. Executive Committee has introduced the Called Ball to complement the Called Strike. This, in addition to a second Pitching Line that joins the existing one to make up the brand-new "Pitcher's Area", has been put in place to speed up games and force pitchers to be more honest in their deliveries.

Batters will see their work changed as well, although only slightly. Those who prefer to come to the plate with extremely wide bats are out of luck this season, as the first restrictions on wood bats have been put in place. Starting today bats must be no more than 2.5 inches in diameter although length, shape, & width are still open to whatever the player desires.

Finally, the playoffs will be radically different this season. After complaints from the two toughest regional championships – New York City & Coastal – the road to the Tucker-Wheaton Cup will now involve all six entrants being placed in one group and playing each other twice, and the team with the best ten-game record lifting the cup.

As always, the Writers Pool has offered their prognostications & opinions on the season ahead, and they are below.

PROJECTED NEW YORK LEAGUE STANDINGS

BROOKLYN	W	L	PCT	GB	R	RA	N.Y.C.	W	L	PCT	GB	R	RA
Excelsior	43	27	.614	--	483	391	Orange	42	28	.600	--	514	475
Eckford	41	29	.586	2	481	425	Metropolitan	40	30	.571	2	471	420
Kings Co.	38	32	.543	5	510	439	Knickerbocker	38	32	.543	4	499	441
Continental	34	36	.486	9	416	426	Harlem	37	33	.529	5	482	437
Empire	32	38	.457	11	427	474	Gotham	34	36	.486	8	504	541
Atlantic	31	39	.443	12	493	519	Mutual	34	36	.485	8	502	516
Bedford	31	39	.443	12	415	497	Union	29	41	.414	13	478	542
Nassau Co.	31	39	.443	12	456	510	Hilltop	28	42	.400	14	399	477

UPSTATE	W	L	PCT	GB	R	RA
Niagara	44	26	.629	--	564	456
Minuteman	36	34	.514	8	461	466
Utica	36	34	.514	8	521	517
Eagle	35	35	.500	9	510	518
Victory	35	35	.500	9	469	501
Flour City	34	36	.486	10	529	530
Syracuse	33	37	.471	11	508	492
Binghamton	30	40	.429	14	473	554

As expected, the influx of talent to Brooklyn & N.Y.C. is expected to make the competition there *very tight* – the last place finishers there finished about twenty games out of first place in '62. The Writers Pool appears to think that Excelsior will learn from last year's late crash, and their new lineup members will lead to better hitting. Orange is expected to repeat as N.Y.C. champions, but Metropolitan is expected to make a big leap from last year's 27-43 record thanks to improving young players and winter signings. Even though Excelsior & Orange are projected to finish 1st, there are no clear favorites in Brooklyn or N.Y.C. Niagara finally becomes the clear favorite in Upstate, as the reconfiguration of the Greater N.Y. Grounds is expected to give their star pitching duo some respite and allow them to pitch as they would in a normal venue.

PROJECTED NORTHEASTERN LEAGUE STANDINGS

COASTAL	W	L	PCT	GB	R	RA	INLAND	W	L	PCT	GB	R	RA
Shamrock	42	28	.600	--	505	418	Merrimack M.	41	29	.586	--	483	448
Mass. Bay	39	31	.557	3	551	467	Susquehanna	41	29	.586	-	518	439
American	37	33	.529	5	537	491	Reading Ath.	40	30	.571	1	517	528
Newark	37	33	.529	5	483	497	Sportsman's	38	32	.543	3	546	496
Quaker St.	37	33	.529	5	499	516	Alleghany	35	35	.500	6	472	459
Port Jersey	35	35	.500	7	454	447	Scranton	35	35	.500	6	453	452
Olympic	28	42	.400	14	470	532	Pioneer	28	42	.400	13	411	462
Trenton Utd.	27	43	.386	15	404	534	Lake Erie	25	45	.357	16	435	551

N ENGLAND	W	L	PCT	GB	R	RA
St. John's	46	24	.657	--	619	452
S.o.t.O.	42	28	.600	4	534	462
Green Mtn.	41	29	.586	5	519	442
Oceanic	36	34	.514	10	517	523
Granite	32	38	.457	14	428	486
Portland	32	38	.457	14	472	504
Cantabrigians	27	43	.386	19	451	574
Quinnipiac	25	45	.357	21	481	579

Shamrock & St. John's, once again, are expected to win their regional championships, though they are not runaway favorites. The Coastal Championship is expected to be extremely close, with five teams expected to finish within a handful of games: the Bostonians, the Philadelphians, & Newark. The usual duo of S.o.t.O. & Green Mountain should give St. John's a good chase in New England, but the best offensive attack in the N.E.L. will likely win out yet again. The Inland Championship is where the base ball should be the most interesting. The Writers Pool has Merrimack & Susquehanna finishing atop Inland with the same record, with Reading one game back, Sportman's a few back, and Alleghany – last season's champions – all the way down in fifth. In the end, all three regional championships in the Northeastern League look like they will be exciting affairs in 1863.

WRITERS POOL GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

When asked for general observations about the upcoming season, here were the main talking points offered up by the 48-member N.B.B.O. Writers Pool:

- The ten most talented batsmen in the N.B.B.O: Edward Huntley (SS, ORA), Anthony Mascherino (SS, G.M.), Konrad Jensen (RF, STJ), Willie Davis (CF, SUS), Samuel Kessler (3B, S.o.t.O.), Jerald Peterson (3B, K.C.), Joe Feuerstein (C, PORT), Gregersen Rohrmann* (CF, KNI), William Johnson (CF, STJ), P.O. Bakken (SS, K.C.)
- The ten most talented pitchers in the N.B.B.O: Jim Creighton (EXC), James Goodman (MIN), Carl Bancroft (EMP), Clydesdale Jackson (HAR), William Pearson (MUT), Grover Wright (NIA), Joe Cunningham (SHA), Walter Johnson (REA), Archie Green (BED), Howard Riggs (GRA)
- The ten best newcomers in the N.B.B.O: Gregersen Rohrmann (CF, KNI), Rossano Bessi (2B, M.B.), Mario Fusilli (1B, KNI), Luc Billon (LF, GOT), Burkhard Winter (LF/CF, MET), John Gaynor (RF, OCE), William Gentilucci (RF, ATL), Edward Donovan (LF, P.J.), George Bendel (CF, N.C.), Jacob Johnson (SS, SCR)
- Even though they lost the services of catcher Thomas Silke to Niagara, Shamrock remains the most talented team in the N.B.B.O, as their lineup does not feature a single player rated as below average at his position in comparison to the other 47 regulars in the competition.
- Niagara outfielder Luther Tatum is expected to follow up the All-Star performance level of his first season with the best average in the N.Y.L. – about .390 – even though Niagara's field dimensions have been made less hitter-friendly.
- The Writers Pool thinks that 1863 will be the year Jim Creighton puts everything together and becomes the best pitcher in the sport. They expect his E.R.A. will go down to around 2.50 and for him to finish with a 25-10 record for an Excelsior team projected atop the Brooklyn Championship.
- Due to the changes to the Greater New York Sporting Grounds, the Niagara pitching duo of Grover Wright & Bernard Schmidt is expected to see their E.R.A. fall by close to a full run. Both pitchers should finish with around 20 Wins.

- Gotham's All-Star duo of Hamish Barclay & Taliesin Buckley is expected to repeat last season's performance, combining to hit around .360 with over 100 R.B.I.
- After one-time M.V.P. Fred Fowler's average went from .308 to .377 in his first season with Utica after leaving Mass. Bay, the W.P. thinks he could hit even better in 1863 after Utica brought in some quality players to surround him in the batting order. He is expected to hit near .385.
- Thanks to Nelson Townsend's outstanding performance in his first season as a regular, St. John's is expected to have the three best outfielders in the Northeastern League, with Townsend, Konrad Jensen, & William Johnson all expected to hit above .350 and steal more than forty bases.
- After his Batting Average plummeted to a career low of .306 last year – his previous low was .350 – Anderson MacGyver of St. John's is being picked for a spectacular return to form this season, with the W.P. figuring him to be good for an average near .385 with a league-leading R.B.I. total.
- Even though he was not named among the top ten newcomers, the Writers Pool thinks new Lake Erie first baseman Wilbur Graff has the potential to be one of the top ten batsmen in the N.E.L, and is likely to hit better than .350. The issue is that his lack of skill in other areas (defense, baserunning) only makes him a three-star player.
- Sportsman's All-Star outfielder Paul Kronenberg is projected to have a comeback season after his average dropped by 45 points in 1862. He is expected to hit close to .370 with more than 60 R.B.I.
- Every team in the N.E.L. is projected to score 400+ runs this season, and because of that the Writers Pool expects no regular pitcher to have an E.R.A. under 3.00, with Shamrock's Joe Cunningham leading the pack at around 3.10.
- John McGowan's run of four straight seasons leading the N.E.L. in wins is expected to come to an end, with the Writers Pool marking in S.o.t.O's Jesse McCoy as the projected Wins leader with 23.