

PLAY BALL: THE 1865 N.B.B.O. PREVIEW

EXCELSIOR TIPPED FOR BEST RECORD; 3-WAY TIE PROJECTED IN UPSTATE; N.E.L. CHAMPS ALL PROJECTED 45-25

NORTHEAST U.S.A. (May 3, 1865) – Season number nine of the National Base Ball Organization begins this afternoon, with Harlem and Metropolitan officially starting the new season just after noon in Hamilton Square in New York City.

The most significant change on the field this year is the removal of the Bound Rule, which will almost certainly lead to an increase in runs until fielders adjust. In addition, three of the biggest stars in the sport have changed addresses, an Inland club down on its luck has undergone a major overhaul, there is a surplus of first-year talent, the Upstate Championship is expected to be a bloodbath, and a member of the old New York City guard may have the most talented team in the N.B.B.O.

The most fascinating projection for the upcoming season is that the Writers Pool believes a three-way tie could be in the cards for the Upstate Championship, with five teams ultimately finishing within three games of each other due the incredibly close level of quality found in most of the Upstate teams.

Other predictions include Excelsior having the best record in the N.B.B.O. thanks to the addition of Harry Nilsson to pitch with mighty Jim Creighton, all three N.E.L. regional champions finishing 45-25, Royal Altman having a shot at being another Newcomer to win Batsman of the Year, Alleghany possibly going from worst to first, Knickerbocker allowing the fewest runs in the N.B.B.O. thanks to their winter additions, and a pair of pitchers crossing the 100 Strikeout mark.

Taking at the projections at face value, it would appear that not a lot is expected to change in the N.B.B.O. Excelsior is expected back on top, Gotham & Knickerbocker are projected to be the top two in N.Y.C, Flour City should be at the top of Upstate, Merrimack is considered likely to win a third straight Inland pennant, and of course St. John's is favored to take New England again. However, the nature of the game itself has changed, and that means anything can happen.

The upcoming season could ultimately be more of the same, but if that happens it will be in spite of major changes.

WRITERS POOL GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

These are the teams that the Writers Pool has named the favorites to advance to the Tucker-Wheaton Cup:

- **BROOKLYN:** Excelsior – 47-23, 560 R.F, 406 R.A. (Empire & Kings Co. 8-10 G.B.)
- **N.Y.C:** Knickerbocker – 42-28, 507 R.F, 394 R.A. (Gotham & Mutual 3-5 G.B.)
- **UPSTATE:** Three-way tie – 39-31 (Flour City, Minuteman, & Niagara – Syracuse & Utica 1-3 G.B.)
- **COASTAL:** Mass. Bay – 45-25, 570 R.F, 479 R.A. (Quaker St, Shamrock, & Trenton 6-8 G.B.)
- **INLAND:** Merrimack Mills – 45-25, 522 R.F, 427 R.A. (Alleghany 1 G.B.)
- **N. ENGLAND:** St. John's – 45-25, 561 R.F, 426 R.A. (Green Mtn. & S.o.t.O. 5 G.B.)

In regard to the projected three-way tie in Upstate New York, the Writers Pool expects Flour City to have the best Run Differential of the three teams – +52 vs +38 for Niagara & +23 for Minuteman – making them the unofficial favorites.

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

- The twenty most talented batsmen in the N.B.B.O: Konrad Jensen (OF, STJ), Edward Huntley (SS, KNI), Anthony Mascherino (SS, G.M.), Nelson Townsend (OF, STJ), Royal Altman^N (OF, ALL), Willie Davis (CF, AME), Samuel Kessler (3B, ALL), Peter Boyce^N (SS, AME), Thomas Maloney (OF, REA), Leslie Arnett (2B, M.M.), Anderson MacGyver (2B, MUT), Declan Brice (CF, K.C.), Ernest Lewis (2B, QUI), Taliesin Buckley (CF, GOT), Joe Feuerstein (C, PORT), Jerald Peterson (3B, S.o.t.O.), Hugh Harris (3B, KNI), Cormack Alexander (1B, K.C.), Franklin Petty (CF, L.E.), Arthur Waltrip (CF, ALL) – ^N *represents Newcomer*
- The ten most talented pitchers in the N.B.B.O: Jim Creighton (EXC), James Goodman (MIN), Fred Richards^N (ALL), Grover Wright (CON), William Tighe^N (STJ), Earl Quinn^N (SYR), Gus Woods^N (NIA), Peadar Daly^N (KNI), Carl Bancroft (EMP), John McGowan (KNI) – ^N *represents Newcomer*
- The ten best newcomers in the N.B.B.O: Royal Altman (OF, ALL), Fred Richards (P, ALL), William Tighe (P, STJ), Earl Quinn (P, SYR), Gus Woods (P, NIA), Peadar Daly (P, KNI), Peter Boyce (SS, AME), Robert Fertel (P, MET),

Frederick Olson (OF, ECK), Roy Vreeken (SS, QUI)

- The ten best reserve squad prospects in the N.B.B.O: Charles Sturch (20 y/o P, Q.S.), George Cerven (19 y/o P, GOT), Isaac Kelly (19 y/o 3B, ECK), Harry Singleton (22 y/o P, SHA), William Shelley (22 y/o P, ORA), Ned Morganti (21 y/o OF, Q.S.), Clyde Branagan (22 y/o P, NIA), Will Chaffin (22 y/o 3B, ORA), William Buschmann (21 y/o CF, UTI), Herbert Todd (21 y/o P, BING)
- The W.P. projected a three-way tie atop the Upstate Championship because they simply cannot agree on who the best team will be. They see Upstate as a relative gauntlet where many of the teams are very close in ability, with the small clubs like Binghamton & Eagle capable of punching above their weight to make matters that much more even. The only projected weak link in Upstate is Victory (26-44), but they have failed to win 30 games in a season only once.
- Excelsior has been tipped to be the N.B.B.O's best team, with projections of a 47-23 record and +154 Run Differential. No new batsmen were added to the lineup, but a pair of second-year players – Uwe Schneider & Jameson Spears – are expected to improve and make the team's offense better. Also, Excelsior has added 1862 N.Y.L. win leader Harry Nilsson (career: 121-101) to give Jim Creighton pitching support.
- Alleghany's offseason overhaul of its roster has resulted in a projected twenty-win improvement from last year's 24-46 record. Currently, their lineup ranks in the top ten at five positions (P, 1B, 3B, LF, & CF) and they have no players that the W.P. has ranked in the bottom half of the N.B.B.O. at their position (lowest: C Martin Elson at 23rd).
- Knickerbocker enters the season as the most talented team in the N.B.B.O after the recruitment of Edward Huntley and Peadar Daly. Their positional rankings, according to the W.P: 4th out of 48 at C, 34th at 1B, 6th at 2B, 3rd at 3B, 1st at SS, 9th at LF, 26th at CF, 2nd at RF, and 8th at P. No other team can match Knickerbocker's seven players ranked in the top ten at their position.
- Merrimack Mills is expected to win Inland for the third year running – even if by just a game – due to consistency and continuity. Both regular pitchers and seven of eight batsmen have returned, with former S.o.t.O. player Lars Kelson expected to be an upgrade in center field over the now-benched Leonard Popa.

- Massachusetts Bay has been picked as the Coastal favorite but, in reality, anything can happen there as all five of the “big” clubs have plenty of talent, and that does not include two-time defending champions Port Jersey. The only thing the W.P. knows for sure is that Olympic will be terrible, with a projected record of 19-51 and a -149 Run Differential.
- The Writers Pool expects Flour City & Kings County to hit 20+ Home Runs this season. If both do, it will mark the first time two teams have hit twenty or more home runs in the same season.
- No team has ever hit below .250 over an entire season, with Empire coming the closest at .251 in the N.B.B.O’s inaugural season. The W.P. believes that this season’s Scranton team could quite possibly become the first to do it.
- Konrad Jensen and St. John’s teammate Nelson Townsend are expected to be the two best batsmen in the N.E.L. this season. With the pair now ages 25 & 24 respectively, both players are expected to continue their slow & steady improvement. If that happens, one or the other could break records in 1865.
- After his record-breaking debut campaign, the Writers Pool has Cormack Alexander winning the N.B.B.O. Batting Title for the second straight season. They do not see last year as a historic fluke, instead viewing Alexander as perhaps the most technical contact hitter in the sport.
- The Writers Pool thinks this will be the year that Jim Creighton crosses 100 Strikeouts in a season. He came very close with 95 last season and, given that Creighton is still only 24 years old, he should continue to improve his extraordinary skills for another couple of years. His 1865 projection: 27-6, 2.48 E.R.A, 105 K’s. That would almost certainly earn Creighton his second New York League M.V.P. in three seasons.
- While the major change to how outs are made is expected to raise the rate of errors significantly, especially among outfielders, the Writers Pool has noted that the influx of high-level pitching talent to the N.B.B.O. might offset any potential league-wide scoring increases that the extra errors would bring.