

PLAY BALL! THE 1866 N.B.B.O. PREVIEW

BIG CLUBS PROJECTED TO TAKE 5/6 REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS; SHAMROCK & ST. JOHN'S TIPPED TO WIN 50+

NORTHEAST U.S.A. (May 2, 1866) – Believe it or not, it is here: the tenth season of organized baseball!

The National Base Ball Organization was created on January 23rd, 1857 at the St. Nicholas Hotel in New York City by a group of base ball men who came together to take the sport from informal hobby to organized competition. Since then, the sport has been stabilized, with rules being codified, clubs keeping consistent schedules, and the sport becoming a popular pastime in the Northeastern United States.

The 1865 season saw one of the two oldest base ball clubs in existence, Knickerbocker of Manhattan, put together the greatest season in N.B.B.O. history and finally take hold of the Tucker-Wheaton Cup for the first time. At the same time, the sport's most famed club, St. John's of Providence, had their first mediocre season and failed to make it to the postseason for the first time. The cup field was dominated by big clubs once again, but Minuteman from the N.Y.L. and Sons of the Ocean from the N.E.L. gave their smaller club brethren someone to look up to during the week and a half of extra base ball.

Looking ahead to the upcoming season, big clubs are expected to dominate the competition like never before, with five of the N.B.B.O's largest clubs expected to win their regional championships and two expected to win more than fifty games. Upstate New York is the only regional championship where big clubs are expected to play second fiddle, but again Upstate is expected to have another season where the competition will be very tight.

Owing to both the increase in errors across the N.B.B.O. and the influx of pitching talent, there were no .400 hitters in the N.B.B.O. last season, and none are expected again this season even if it is anticipated that offensive production will increase just a bit in both leagues.

The N.B.B.O's tenth season may be one in which the most powerful clubs are able to do as they please, leaving fans of many of the other clubs asking for redress. Obviously, the season will have to play out to see if this comes true.

WRITERS POOL PREDICTIONS & GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

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

- BROOKLYN: Excelsior – 45-25, 512 R, 391 R.A. (Atlantic 3 G.B.)
- N.Y.C: Knickerbocker – 47-23, 584 R, 407 R.A. (Harlem & Orange 2-4 G.B.)
- UPSTATE: Syracuse – 42-28, 525 R, 434 R.A. (Utica 2 G.B; every team expected to win 30+ games)
- COASTAL: Shamrock – 51-19, 494 R, 323 R.A. (American 5 G.B.)
- INLAND: Alleghany – 46-24, 586 R, 454 R.A. (Susquehanna 4 G.B.)
- N. ENGLAND: St. John's – 53-17, 641 R, 360 R.A. (Sons of the Ocean 10 G.B.)

All six regional championship favorites have previous postseason experience. Syracuse has the least, having lost in the New York League Semi-finals in 1861 with no other postseason appearances.

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), Nelson Townsend (OF, STJ), Edward Huntley (SS, KNI), Anthony Mascherino (SS, SHA), Royal Altman (OF, ALL), Willie Davis (CF, AME), Peter Boyce (2B, AME), Thomas Maloney (OF, REA), Werner Verstegen* (3B, AME), Samuel Kessler (3B, ALL), Anderson MacGyver (2B, MUT), Franklin Petty (CF, L.E.), Albert Gore (2B, S.o.t.O.), William Johnson (CF, STJ), Henry Nabors* (SS, VIC), Jerald Peterson (3B, S.o.t.O.), Walter Williams (CF, SHA), Arthur Waltrip (CF, ALL), Cormack Alexander (1B, K.C.), Declan Brice (CF, K.C.) – * represents Newcomer
- The ten most talented pitchers in the N.B.B.O: Jim Creighton (EXC), Tom Ricks* (SHA), James Goodman (MIN), Grover Wright (CON), John Brown* (UTI), Fred Richards (ALL), Elmer Seabold (SUS), John McGowan (KNI), Thomas Smith* (SHA), Peadar Daly (KNI) – * represents Newcomer
- The ten best newcomers in the N.B.B.O: Werner Verstegen (3B, AME), Tom Ricks (P, SHA), John Brown (P, UTI), Henry Nabors (SS, VIC), Thomas Smith (P, SHA), Raynard Cordell (P, ORA), Daniel Flynn (P, GOT), Henry Neal (SS,

SYR), Martin Craven (OF, GRA), Karl Valentine (CF, PORT)

- The ten best reserve squad prospects in the N.B.B.O: Ned Morganti (21 y/o OF, Q.S.), Charles Sturch (21 y/o P, Q.S.), George Cerven (20 y/o P, GOT), Isaac Kelly (20 y/o 3B, ECK), Roy Myers (22 y/o C, G.M.), Everett Schreiber (22 y/o C, ORA), Willie Gray (22 y/o P, F.C.), Nicholas Banfield (18 y/o P, MUT), Jonathan Hill (20 y/o P, AME), William Buschmann (22 y/o CF, UTI)
- The top end of the N.B.B.O. is expected to be unusually dominant this year. The Writers Pool has predicted eight teams to have a Run Differential of over +100: Alleghany (+135), Excelsior (+120), Knickerbocker (+180), Orange (+115), Shamrock (+170), Sons of the Ocean (+125), St. John's (+280), & Susquehanna (+100).
- In Brooklyn, Excelsior is projected to win the championship again because of...who else...Jim Creighton. Their batting talent is not great, but it does not need to be. 6x Brooklyn champs Kings County are predicted to finish under .500 for the first time because they are lacking in talent outside of Cormack Alexander & Declan Brice.
- New York City should belong to Knickerbocker once again, although the Writers Pool is not expecting anything like another 57-win season due to the depth of the competition. Harlem's great second half last year bodes well for this season, Orange looks great on paper, and Gotham brought in Leslie Arnett after losing Taliesin Buckley.
- Upstate is expected to be a close-knit group from top to bottom yet again. This year's favorites are Syracuse due to the signing of 3x All-Star Zarek Polakowski & talented newcomer Henry Neal. Defending champs Minuteman are expected to finish 34-36 because the Writers Pool doubts that they have mentally recovered from losing their final 14 games of 1865: the last four of the season plus the 0-10 catastrophe in the Tucker-Wheaton Cup. While it has been 8.5 months since their last game, that kind of run is something that can affect a team for a long time.
- The Coastal Championship should be Shamrock's after their addition of Anthony Mascherino at SS. They later added 1x All-Star Julius Weinert to address the 1B issue, and they also have the two of the best newcomers at pitcher: Tom Ricks & Thomas Smith. Not surprisingly American, with their top-tier talent, should be Shamrock's biggest challenger.
- The Inland Championship should see Alleghany repeat with nearly the same record as last season, as every important player is back and they have added former Newark pitcher John Henry. Susquehanna, which has done a great job of

rebuilding after losing Willie Davis, looks to be their only serious competition.

- The Writers Pool thinks that the changes St. John's made over the winter will have them back on top of New England in a big way, with the team projected to have the best record in the N.B.B.O. as well as the best offense at over 9.0 R/G. Sons of the Ocean could be a 45-win team, but the rest of New England appears to be cannon fodder.
- Aside from being expected to challenge the single-season run scoring record, the Writers Pool also thinks that St. John's could come close to their single-season stolen base record of 248. In contrast, the speediest team in the New York League, Knickerbocker, is projected to steal 130 bases.
- The Writers Pool expects Shamrock to allow roughly 325 runs (4.6 R/G) this season. That would set a new Northeastern League record and come within ten runs of the record Knickerbocker set last season.
- After a fine debut season in Syracuse in which he raised his average 70 points to a career high, Mario Fusilli has been favored to end Cormack Alexander's two-year reign as the N.Y.L. Batting Champion. Thomas Maloney has been tipped to repeat as N.E.L. Batting Champion.
- The preseason favorites for Batsman of the Year in each league are Hugh Harris in the N.Y.L. and Konrad Jensen in the N.E.L. If Edward Huntley's production is back to normal then Harris should be able to drive in 80+ runs for Knickerbocker with a high average and stolen base count. Konrad Jensen was an extremely valuable player last year even though his average was a career low at .332, because he set N.B.B.O. records in walks and steals. If Jensen's average goes back up to the .375-.380 range then there is no way anybody will be better than him.
- Jim Creighton crossed the 100-strikeout barrier last year, going all the way to 133. He will still be only 25 years old on opening day, and because of that the Writers Pool thinks Creighton could go to 150 strikeouts this year AND become the first regular pitcher to finish the season with an E.R.A. under 2.00.
- The Alleghany trio of Royal Altman, Samuel Kessler, & Arthur Waltrip is expected to be three of the best batsmen in the Northeastern League again this year. The W.P. thinks Waltrip will be the best of the three with a .360 average.