

KNICK SURVIVES GAUNTLET; COLONIAL TOO CLOSE TO CALL

KNICK GOES 6-3 VS KC, SHAMROCK, & ST. JOHN'S; COLONIAL TOP THREE SEPARATED BY TWO GAMES

NORTHEAST U.S.A. (Aug. 19, 1878) – There's one week left to play in the 1878 A.P.B.L. season, and with the way the standings currently look it appears that one conference is about to be decided while the other is simply too close to call.

In the Metropolitan Conference, everybody was watching Knickerbocker coming out of the All-Star break due to the nine-game gauntlet they had to run, consisting of series vs Kings County, Shamrock, & St. John's. Do well, and the Metro was theirs. Slip up against three of the five best teams in the league, and the Metro would be wide open again.

Knick's first series was its most favorable one: a home set against St. John's. The results...

GAME 1: StJ 5-6 KNI – KNI: 5 Runs during 8th-9th; GW Hit by C Cale Jones

GAME 2: StJ 5-6 KNI – KNI C Cale Jones: GW Hit in B9

GAME 3: StJ 6-9 KNI – KNI LF Clive Strachan: 3/5 (2B, HR), 3 R, 3 RBI, 2 SB, 7 TB

It was a clean sweep – an extremely difficult sweep, but a three-game sweep nonetheless. The opener saw a fantastic fightback from Knick. Behind 5-1 going into B8 the hosts scored four times to tie the game, and then in B9 Jones hit a run-scoring Triple to win it. They won by the same score under the same circumstances the next day, with Jones' run-scoring Double in B9 giving Knick a second straight walk-off victory. Game Three was won thanks to three runs in B7 and an outstanding performance by veteran OF Clive Strachan.

Next was the most important series: three games at second-place Kings County...

GAME 1: KNI 8-15 KC – KC C Carl Nevers: 4/5 (2 2B), 1 R, 6 RBI, 2/3 CS

GAME 2: KNI 4-3 KC (12) – KNI C Cale Jones: 2/5 (both 1B), 3 RBI, GW SAC FLY, 1/2 CS

GAME 3: KNI 5-10 KC – KC 2B Herman Stanley: 2/4 (2B), 3 R, 1 RBI, 1 BB

Kings County did what they needed to do and took 2/3 from visiting Knick. The opener wasn't as close as the score suggested, as K.C. was ahead 15-4 going into the ninth. Game two was a nail-biter, with the teams trading runs during the 7th, 8th, 9th, & 10th, before Jones came through with his third game-winning RBI in five days. The finale was another solid K.C. home win in which the hosts took an early 3-0 lead and never trailed.

That left the final series: three games at Colonial Conference leaders Shamrock...

GAME 1: KNI 7-10 SHA – SHA 1B Frank Bulger: 3/4 (2B), 3 R, 4 RBI, 2 SB

GAME 2: KNI 7-1 SHA – KNI P Robert Goodman: CG W (25-16, 3.08), 6 HA, 1 ER, 0 BB, 3 K

GAME 3: KNI 8-6 SHA – KNI: 6 Runs in T9 (was KNI 2-5 SHA): GW Hit by 1B Cormack Alexander

Knick struggled during the opener in Boston, with repeated defensive miscues dooming them to their third multi-run loss in four games. However, they bounced back with a 7-1 win in the middle game thanks to excellent pitching by Goodman. The series ender had an incredible finish: half a dozen runs by Knick in T9 – this time the big hit a two-run Single by Alexander – to stun Shamrock and take the series.

In the end, it took some incredibly tense & thrilling finishes to get there but Knickerbocker managed to go 6-3 during the toughest nine-game run any A.P.B.L. team had experienced all season. More importantly, even though Kings County went 2-1 against Knick they were 2-4 over their other six games during the same stretch, which meant that the top of the Metropolitan standings had gone from this...

1: Knickerbocker at 49-26

2: Kings County at 46-29 (3 GB)

...to this...

1: Knickerbocker at 55-29 (Magic #: 2)

2: Kings County at 50-34 (5 GB)

...with one week remaining in the season. Kings Co. had squandered their series win against Knick, and with the leaders about to play Quaker St. (34-50) the pennant race now appears to be all but over.

Incredibly, the Colonial Conference is offering up even more excitement.

With both Shamrock & St. John's having to go against top teams last week they played around .500 baseball, and as a result Niagara was able to sneak up the standings and turn the Colonial into what will be a [three-way sprint to the finish](#):

- 1: Shamrock at 50-34 (+62 RD)
- 2: Niagara at 50-34 (+57 RD)
- 3: St. John's at 48-36 (2 GB; +178 RD)

Unfortunately for St. John's, the A.P.B.L. doesn't do anything straight out of fantasy land use the Mathematician's "Pythagorean" Win-Loss formula to determine the standings, or else it would look like this:

- 1: St. John's 52-32 (best in A.P.B.L.)
- 2: Shamrock at 46-38 (6 GB)
- 3: Niagara at 46-38 (6 GB)

Why the eight-game discrepancy between where St. John's is in the standings where they should be when factoring Run Differential? They are an uncharacteristic 9-13 in one-run games this year and 2-5 in Extra Innings. Meanwhile, Shamrock is 10-7 in close contests and Shamrock is even better at 15-7. Knickerbocker is the best "one-run" team in the league at 13-5.

The three teams' schedules over the final week look like this:

- SHAMROCK: at St. John's, at Orange (33-51)
- NIAGARA: at Pt. Jersey (43-41), vs Kings Co.
- ST. JOHN'S: vs Shamrock, at Quaker St. (34-50)

Obviously, the HUGE series will be Shamrock at St. John's in Rhode Island on Tuesday-Thursday. If St. John's can take 2/3 off the co-leaders then it opens up the very real possibility of a three-way tie to end the season. It's hard to say if any of the three teams has a clear schedule advantage when it comes to the final week of play, but Niagara does have the toughest pair of opponents out of the three.

There is protocol for what to do in the event of a three-way tie after all games have been played. In the 1867 N.B.B.O. season Alleghany, Pioneer, & Susquehanna all finished 40-30 in the Inland Championship. It was agreed that the teams would be sorted by head-to-head record against the other two. The team with the best head-to-head record, Alleghany, waited to host the winner of the game between Pioneer & Susquehanna in a one-game playoff to determine the Inland champion. The same happened in West Philadelphia during the second season of the P.C.B.L. after a three-way tie between Mercantile, Merion, & Schuylkill at 39-31. A similar format will be used if Niagara, Shamrock, & St. John's all finish tied for first place.

With one week left in the A.P.B.L. season, one incredible pennant race looks to be coming to a close and the other appears to be headed toward a finish about as exciting as one could imagine.