

THE HALFWAY POINT

FAMILIAR FACES ON TOP IN NEW ENGLAND; NEW YORK IS WIDE OPEN

NORTHEAST U.S.A. (June 16, 1862) – The base ball season is halfway over, and as always things have not played out as they were expected to on paper before the season began. While the usual familiar faces are at the top of the standings in New England and much of New York is as wide-open as it has ever been, there are still surprises to be had.

General observations from the first half of the season:

- The biggest surprise is the team with the best record: Mutual B.B.C. at 26-9 in the cutthroat New York City Championship. Projected to go 39-31 by the Writers Pool, Mutual is currently six games clear in N.Y.C. thanks to the N.B.B.O.'s best defense and its second-best offense. Newcomer Leo Johnson took over at 1B for Charles Cannavaro a little over three weeks ago, and he has hit .438 across seventeen starts.
- Right up there with Mutual is Excelsior B.B.C., also 26-9 but considered second in record due to Run Differential (+36 vs. Mutual's +84). Excelsior is five games clear in Brooklyn, but their place is more precarious as their attack is only 11th in the N.Y.L. in Runs Scored and 18th in Batting Average. Their 16-4 home record is the N.B.B.O.'s best, and Jim Creighton, on a pace to blow away his own strikeout record, now looks like the superstar he was projected to be.
- Unsurprisingly, preseason favorites Shamrock B.B.C. have the Northeastern League's best record at 24-11, thanks to the league-best pitching duo of Joe Cunningham and Frank Freitag. The two have combined for a 2.65 E.R.A., best for a starting pair in the N.E.L. Shamrock's defense is also #1 in the N.E.L., as every member of the lineup has been a positive in the field.
- Niagara, thought to be an N.Y.L. favorite, is instead part of the usual Upstate dogfight at 20-15 (4th) and two games out of first, with Syracuse (22-13), Utica (21-14), and the surprising Eagle (21-14) in front of them. Niagara started off

strong, but their form has slipped as Grover Wright has struggled heavily in losing four of his last five starts – his E.R.A. over the month of June sitting at 5.64 over 60.2 innings.

- St. John's is once again first place in the New England Championship, but New England is the tightest it has ever been after 35 games. STJ is tied with Green Mountain, while Portland and Sons of the Ocean are just one game back at 20-15. They are receiving excellent hitting from new starter Nelson Townsend and 1B Collin Henderson, but Anderson MacGyver is hitting one hundred points under his career average, Konrad Jensen fifty, and John McGowan has not been pitching his best.
- Alleghany was sitting pretty atop the Inland Championship a week ago, but four losses in five games have pulled them back into a tie with Merrimack Mills. Preseason favorites Reading are seventh at 16-19. Alleghany's best player has been 2B Willie Smith, while Merrimack has been led by former Green Mtn. outfielder Alexander Hedrick.
- Offense in both leagues is up by 0.3 runs per game so far this season. Walks are up slightly due to the new "Called Ball" rule, and the new rule has caused batsmen to be more aggressive at the plate.
- Niagara B.B.C. is the best-hitting team in the N.B.B.O, with a .335 average and what would be a record-setting O.P.S. of .795. Thanks to their home venue Niagara does not have the highest O.P.S.+ in the competition (Orange at 117), but they have a trio of .350 hitters and are led by Arvi Hämäläinen at .442.
- Shamrock B.B.C. has allowed thirty fewer runs than any of the 47 other teams, and their 2.57 team E.R.A. is 0.40 better than any other team. Their pitching duo of Cunningham & Freitag have not been the best in the sport when it comes to things like walks and strikeouts – far from it – but combined they are allowing more than a hit per game less than anyone else. Of course, the Shamrock defense has played no small part in that success.
- Niagara first baseman Arvi Hämäläinen was moved to the leadoff spot in their batting order due to the quality contact he makes, even though his footspeed is just average. The results so far: he leads the whole N.B.B.O. in Average (.442), On-Base (.509), O.P.S. (1.080), Hits (65), Runs (101), and O.P.S.+ (182).

Those are just some of the observations from the first half of the N.B.B.O. season. No doubt the second half will provide plenty of excitement, especially in the subdivisions where there are four or five teams very close to first place.