

THE 1863 CUP FIELD IS SET!

FIVE OF SIX REGIONAL CHAMPIONS ARE MAKING THEIR POST-SEASON DEBUTS

NORTHEAST U.S.A (Aug. 10, 1863) – Another season of play in the National Base Ball Organization has come to its end, and for as much parity as there was across the competition during the first half of the season most of the regional championships saw a lot of separation between the best and the rest over the final seven weeks of action. At the midway mark four of the six championships saw first and second place only one game apart, but in the end three were decided by five or more games and none of the six saw the second-place team closer than three games behind first.

After the first seven weeks there was one team that was on a pace to win fifty of seventy games, and in the end there were two, with both going 50-20 on the season. Only one of the 48 teams had less than a .400 winning percentage after seven week, but in the end that number rose to eight. Of the six regional champions, half ended their season by winning eight or nine of their last ten games. Competition-wide, it was a tale of two very different halves to the season.

BROOKLYN – There was no second half collapse for Excelsior this season, and as a result they are playing for the cup for the first time. They were 25-10 with a five-game lead at the halfway point, and they finished the season 48-22 with Kings County seven games back in second place. Their offense could only find a place atop the bottom third of the N.Y.L, but it did not matter when Jim Creighton had the ball.

NEW YORK CITY – Thanks to a 24-11 second half to the season, Harlem B.B.C. is playing extra base ball for the first time, besting the combination of Gotham & Orange by four games each to become N.Y.C. champions. They were led by three All-Stars: Jackson Butler (SS), Wilson Clark (CF), & Clydesdale Jackson (P).

UPSTATE – Niagara pulled away from the Upstate pack with a 26-9 second half – best in the N.Y.L. – to reach cup play for the first time. Thanks to the new field at the Greater N.Y. Sporting Grounds the star pitching duo of Bernard Schmidt &

Grover Wright was borderline invincible, and veteran stars like Joseph Bentley found their groove at the perfect time. Flour City was never able to fix their pitching issues, and Binghamton actually snuck by them to finish in second place.

COASTAL – Port Jersey, like Niagara, used a 26-9 second half to win fifty games and become Coastal champions for the first time, seeing off a tough challenge from Shamrock. Both pitchers – Lanny Buchanan & Thomas Hines – won 20+ games, and they had two batsmen hit better than .350: 1862 All-Star Boudewijn Mulder and All-Star newcomer Edward Donovan.

INLAND – Merrimack Mills & Sportsman's were only a game apart entering August, but Merrimack won five of their last six games to take their first Inland pennant by three games over Sportsman's – yet another team making their postseason debut. They were led by a trio of All-Stars: Leslie Arnett (2B), Alexander Hedrick (OF), & Leroy Weld (3B). Four-time champs Allegheny finished seventh at 27-43.

NEW ENGLAND – It looked like 1863 might FINALLY be the year that St. John's would be taken down in the New England Championship, but after Green Mountain led the N.E.C. by one game after seven weeks St. John's ripped off an absurd 28-7 second half to take yet another New England pennant by seven games and finish as the N.B.B.O's other 50-20 team. John McGowan led the N.E.L. in wins for the fifth season in a row and won 20+ games for the sixth season running. Outfielders Konrad Jensen & Nelson Townsend both finished the season batting over .375. They were one run away from scoring 600+ runs as a team for the second time.

With the playoffs set to begin it is important to remember that there are no playoff series this year, with one ten-game group final taking place instead. This came about due to dissent from clubs in the tougher regional championships last offseason, and the irony of it is that if there were playoffs this season the Shamrock Club would have finally earned the #1 seed they were claiming they had been unfairly denied by virtue of playing in the Coastal Championship.

Here are the entrants in order of record:

THE 1863 TUCKER-WHEATON CUP

NEW ENGLAND CHAMPIONS: St. John's Baseball Club (50-20, +188 runs)

COASTAL CHAMPIONS: Port Jersey Baseball Club (50-20, +133 runs)

BROOKLYN CHAMPIONS: Excelsior Base Ball Club (48-22, +93 runs)

UPSTATE CHAMPIONS: Niagara Base Ball Club (46-24, +142 runs)

NEW YORK CITY CHAMPIONS: Harlem Base Ball Club (46-24, +79 runs)

INLAND CHAMPIONS: Merrimack Mills Baseball Club (44-26, +102 runs)

FORMAT: Each team plays every other team twice, for a total of ten games. The team with the best record wins the cup. Extra games will be played if there is a tie for 1st. Head-to-Head record and Run Differential will be used as tiebreakers to determine other positions in the case of identical record.

Given how well the six regional champions played at the end of the season – St. John's was 9-1, Merrimack & Niagara were 8-2, Excelsior was 7-3, Harlem & Port Jersey were 6-4 – one can expect to see the highest level of performance on display over the next week and a half.

The Writers Pool has been asked their collective opinion of what they expect of this year's cup competition, and they have the teams in the following order:

- #1: St. John's (50-20, 28-7 2nd half, 9-1 Last 10)
- #2: Port Jersey (50-20, 26-9 2nd half, 6-4 Last 10)
- #3: Excelsior (48-22, 23-12 2nd half, 7-3 Last 10)
- #4: Niagara (46-24, 26-9 2nd half, 8-2 Last 10)
- #5: Harlem (46-24, 24-11 2nd half, 6-4 Last 10)
- #6: Merrimack Mills (44-26, 22-13 2nd half, 8-2 Last 10)

All that is left is for the six teams to play ball.