

BEWARE, BEWARE, THE TRENTON TERROR!

NEW JERSEY OUTFIELDER IS THE MOST SOUGHT-AFTER PROSPECT EVER FROM INDEPENDENT BALL

TRENTON, N.J. (Oct. 24, 1866) – The National Base Ball Organization is about two months into its offseason, and the end of October is when its 48 member clubs begin contacting players in the hopes of successfully recruiting them to play in their uniforms next season. Of all the available players the clubs are hoping to bring in over the winter, one player has been the subject of significantly more discussion than all others: an outfielder from Trenton, New Jersey playing independent ball named [James Burke](#).

Burke, who will turn 26 in December, is someone who was regarded as having the talent to be a fine player the N.B.B.O. roughly five years ago, but he comes from a wealthy New Jersey family and had been working as a banker while occasionally playing the “unrefined” sport of base ball around New Jersey during the weekends each summer. However, Burke took a greater interest in the sport over the past couple of years, and as a result he displayed talents that clubs unanimously agree could make him an extraordinary batsman in the N.B.B.O.

Here was the formal report that the Trenton-based member of the Writers Pool filed on him in August, using the newfangled 1-10 Rating Scale:

JAMES BURKE – OF, Independent Ball – 25 y/o, 5'10", 180 lbs. from Trenton, N.J. (USA/IRL) – 5.0 ★

- **BATTING:** Contact 10+ (Average 10+, Avoid K 10+), Gap 9, Eye 7
- **DEFENSE (OF):** Range 8, Error 7, Arm 6
- **POSITIONS:** LF 7(9), CF 6, RF 7(8)
- **OTHER:** Speed 10, Stealing 10+ (Agg. 10+, Ability 10+), Baserunning 10+, Bunting 6 (Sac. 6, Hit 6)
- **PERSONALITY:** High Intelligence & Work Ethic, Adaptable, Wants Money, Disloyal, not a Leader
- **NOTES:** *Has been given the nickname “The Trenton Terror” while traveling around New Jersey playing informal base ball. Simple but devastating swing makes him a line-drive hitter, and I could see him batting .370 to .420 while leading his league in extra-base hits. Somewhat patient, but that doesn't really matter. Steals and takes extra bases at will; more than his already considerable speed should let him. Fine OF; only complaint is that his range doesn't*

match his speed. Physically durable; keeps himself fit. Comes from a rich family, so will want a good-money job while playing organized ball. Could enter the N.B.B.O. and immediately become its best batsman.

It has been reported that Burke wants to play in the N.B.B.O. next year, and his options are limitless. Every club with a reputation wants his services: every club in Brooklyn, everybody in New York City, the three big Upstate clubs, the Bostonians & Philadelphians in the Coastal Championship, Alleghany, St. John's, and his hometown club: Trenton United. In reality all 48 clubs would be in heaven to have him play for them, but the ones listed are believed to be the candidates.

Speculation is that Trenton Utd. are the initial favorites since Burke and his family are successful bankers there, so playing for them would mean he would not have to exit the lucrative family business. However, it surely would not be much of an issue for any of the major metropolitan clubs to connect him with a cushy financial job as part of securing his services. Also, he could have that well-paying job while taking part in the issue that is quickly becoming a major concern in the sport: under the table cash payments, which any big club would be happy to give him while also being difficult to prove.

Is it premature to anoint James Burke the N.B.B.O.'s newest superstar before he has even played a game? Of course; Werner Verstegen looked like the best third baseman in the competition on paper when he joined American last season, but it took him a while to get going and he did not even make the All-Star Game. That having been said, at the very least Burke should be able to terrorize opposing teams because of his speed and baserunning ability.

If Burke joins one of the northeastern clubs, it would likely mean that Northeastern League clubs will start the 1867 season with nine of the ten best batsmen in the N.B.B.O. while the New York set would retain control of the top tier of pitching talent. Is one league becoming the "batting" league and the other the "pitching" league? The statistics do not show that to be the case now, but if current recruitment trends continue then in a year or two it could well be the case. It will likely come down to which club Burke signs for, and how well he performs.

In any event, the fight is on for the services of James Burke, and it will be a bloody one.