

# TWC XVII: SIX TEAMS, BUT NO FAVORITES

NORTHEAST U.S.A. (Aug. 20 to Sep. 3, 1873) – The 1873 edition of the Tucker-Wheaton Cup playoffs was the second since the return to its original format. The previous edition had proven why the change from a Round Robin format back to a Playoff format was the right one, as 43-27 Portland took out defending champions and runaway #1 team Quaker State (54-16) in a stunning NEL Championship Series upset after losing the first two games, with Eckford lifting the cup for the first time.

Headlining the field was the defending cup champions: Eckford of Greenpoint, whose late surge for the second straight season carried them to the playoffs for the second straight season. There were two other returnees: 1871 champions Quaker State and Portland, who had both finished 1st in their regions for the third season in a row.

Two other teams had postseason experience. Metropolitan was in after having taken 1st place in New York City for the second time in three years – their third pennant overall. Also, New York League #1 seed Utica was in the cup playoffs for the second time, although it was their first trip in eleven years.

That left one newcomer: Pioneer Baseball Club, who had finally taken the Inland Championship pennant after finishing 2nd the previous two seasons and agonizingly losing out in the famous three-team Inland playoff of 1867. Pioneer had the best record in the NBBO (46-24), claiming the #1 spot on the back of a balanced lineup and excellent work by their #1, Charles McCormick (23-11, 2.23 ERA, 4.6 WAR).

Unlike last year, there was no clear favorite heading into the playoffs. Quaker State was in again, but they were eleven wins worse than last season – 43-27 v 54-16. Pioneer had set a record low for Wins as the overall #1 team in the NBBO. Utica looked like the most complete team in the competition, but they weren't ranked #1 in the NYL in any notable category other than Home Runs. Metropolitan was very reliant on its star batsman trio. Eckford was very reliant on its #1 defense. Portland was only 20-15 over the second half of the season.

The 1873 Tucker-Wheaton Cup playoffs were the first since the 1870 edition where there wasn't an obvious favorite when it came time for First Pitch. Would Eckford take advantage of the uncertainty and repeat as champions? Could Quaker State take cup win number two? Or could one of the other teams claim the NBBO title for the first time?

## NEW YORK LEAGUE SEMIFINALS

GAME 1: MET 8-7 ECK (11) – Troy Oberst (LF, MET) 2/5, 2B, 3B, 1 R, 2 RBI, BB, GW HIT

GAME 2: MET 5-8 ECK – Isaac Kelly (3B, ECK) 3/5, HR, 3 RBI, 6 TB

GAME 3: ECK 3-8 MET – George Brown (RF, MET) 4/5, 2B, 2 R, 1 RBI, 5 TB

GAME 4: ECK 8-9 MET – George Brown (RF, MET) 1/3 (1B), 3 R, 2 RBI, BB

Game One was a tight affair, with Eckford enjoying an early 5-1 lead before late Metro rallies tied the game 7-7 and forced Extra Innings before 3x All-Star Oberst won it with a run-scoring Triple in the 11th. Game Two saw Eckford even the series as Kelly opened the scoring with a two-run Home Run in the bottom of the 1st before the hosts took a 5-0 lead by the end of the 3rd and eased the win home.

Metropolitan's first home game in the series was an easy one, as five runs over the middle innings gave the hosts a 6-1 lead that Eckford couldn't put a dent in. Metropolitan ended the champions' reign the next day, beating back a 6-2 deficit with two runs in the 6th and four more in the 7th to take an 8-6 lead that wouldn't be relinquished. Brown took Player of the Game honors for the second day in a row, and thus series MVP as a result.

## NORTHEASTERN LEAGUE SEMIFINALS

GAME 1: PORT 15-9 QS – Enda Reed (1B, PORT) 3/6 (all 1B), 2 R, 4 RBI

GAME 2: PORT 13-8 QS – Carrick Kennedy (2B, PORT) 4/6, 2 3B, 2 R, 3 RBI, 8 TB

GAME 3: QS 10-11 PORT (10) – Gerhardt Berg (1B, QS) 4/5 (all 1B), 0 R, 5 RBI

Game One saw Portland pick up where they left off last year, stunning Quaker St. in Philadelphia with thirteen runs combined in the 5th & 7th on the way to another memorable win. Incredibly, Portland repeated the trick in Game Two with nine runs over the middle innings as they eventually hung a Baker's Dozen worth of runs on the team that finished tied for the NEL lead in Runs Allowed at 6.8 per contest.

Unbelievably, Portland finished a series sweep in Maine, overcoming deficits of 5-0 after two and 8-5 in the 9th with a three-run rally – Reed's two-run Double tying the game – to force Extra Innings. Quaker St. thought they were safe after two runs

in the top of the 10th, but three Quaker St. Errors allowed three Portland runs to come in during B10, and Portland had ended Quaker St.'s postseason for the second year in a row. Enda Reed, who hit 8/17 with 7 RBI, was named series MVP.

### NEW YORK LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

GAME 1: MET 7-2 UTI – Jerald Peterson (1B, MET) 3/5, 2B, 0 R, 2 RBI, 4 TB

GAME 2: MET 11-8 UTI – Harold Rowsey (C, MET) 3/5, 2B, 2 R, 3 RBI, 4 TB

GAME 3: UTI 10-5 MET – Fox Ellis (3B, UTI) 2/5, 2B, 2 R, 3 RBI, 3 TB

GAME 4: UTI 11-7 MET – James Heilman (LF, UTI) 4/6, 2B, 2 R, 3 RBI, 5 TB

GAME 5: MET 2-9 UTI – William Buschmann (CF, UTI) 4/5, 2B, 1 R, 0 RBI, 5 TB

Metropolitan struck first in the NYLCS, with the 7th the decisive inning. The score tied 2-2, PH John Norris hit a two-run Double to put Metro up 4-2, and three insurance runs in the 9th made sure the win was theirs. Metro made it two away wins in two days with a six-run 8th in Game Two, a rally that began when leadoff man Troy Oberst reached via Error and the floodgates opened from there to turn a three-run deficit into a three-run lead that stayed that way.

Utica returned the away team favor in a must-win Game Three, a result that was never in doubt as the visitors were ahead 10-0 by the middle of the 5th. Ellis was PotG, and four other Utica batsmen had two hits. Utica then made it four away team wins in four games with dominant middle innings at Hamilton Square. Behind 4-3 going into the 5th Utica scored eight times over their next two turns at bat to go ahead 11-4 and force a deciding game back in Upstate New York.

And then the comeback was complete. With eight runs in the bottom of the 1st Utica effectively sealed Metropolitan's fate and completed a reversal of the 2-0 deficit, while the visitors would be left kicking themselves all winter over the fact that they blew a 2-0 series lead that started with two away victories.

### NORTHEASTERN LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

GAME 1: PORT 10-4 PIO – Carrick Kennedy (2B, PORT) 3/6, 3B, 3 R, 3 RBI, 5 TB

GAME 2: PORT 9-10 PIO – Hillard Patrick (PH, PIO) 1/1, 2B, 3 RBI, GW HIT

GAME 3: PIO 2-3 PORT in 12 – James Dressman (P, PORT) CG, 4 HA, 0 ER, 1 BB, 3 K

#### GAME 4: PIO 13-16 PORT – Endra Reed (1B, PORT) 5/5 (all 1B), 5 R, 2 RBI, 3 SB

Portland won Game One in Springfield early but sealed the win late. Up 4-2 going into the 6th, Portland scored six times over their final four times at bat to go ahead 10-2, with Carrick & Enda Reed the stars. Pioneer evened the series in Game Two in memorable fashion. Down 9-5 going into the bottom of the 9th, the hosts unleashed a five-run rally and won the game when Pinch Hitter Hillard Patrick hit a bases-clearing, three-run Double with two out and Portland #1 James Dressman in the game to try to get Portland out of a difficult situation.

Game Three in Portland was a classic defensive duel. With Pioneer ahead 2-0, Portland came to bat in the 8th and scored via Single & Sac Fly to tie the game 2-2, ultimately forcing extra frames. With both #1's, Charles McCormick & Dressman, in top form, it took until B12 to find a winner, when Louis Beane singled in Carrick Kennedy to win the game for Portland.

Game Four was the polar opposite of Game Three: offense in abundance from the first pitch. It certainly looked like the NEL #1 would force a Game Five at the midway point, as Pioneer was ahead 11-3 in the middle of the 5th. However, a ferocious Portland fightback saw the defending NEL champs score no less than thirteen unanswered runs, and by the time Pioneer came to bat in the top of the 9th the score was 16-11, with their Maine hosts punching their tickers to the Tucker Wheaton Cup finals for the second consecutive year.

# TUCKER-WHEATON CUP XVII FINAL

It was now time for the 17th Tucker-Wheaton Cup final. Just as last year, it would involve the #1 seed from the New York League and a Portland group that upset the team with the best record in the NBBO.

On paper Utica were favorites, as they had the most complete team in the playoffs. Based on performance Portland was the more dangerous team, as they went 5-1 in the Northeastern League Playoffs, were right back where they finished up in 1872, and were looking to avenge last year's five-game finals loss.

## GAME ONE (Conkling Field in Utica, N.Y.)

PORT 7-8 UTI – John Baddley (2B, UTI) 3/4, 2B, 3 R, 2 RBI, 4 TB

The opener was won on a late rally by Utica. With the score 5-5 in the going into the bottom of the 8th, Utica came to bat and scored three times on consecutive run-scoring Singles by Baddley, the ageless James Heilman, and Fox Ellis to go ahead 8-5. Portland then came to bat in the 9th and scored twice on a Hiram Britton Triple & Carrick Kennedy Single before the next three men went down to end what looked like a rally that would put Portland ahead, saving Utica's victory.

## GAME TWO (Conkling Field in Utica, N.Y.)

PORT 10-8 UTI – Jonathan Ovaska (CF, PORT) 2/4 (both 1B), 1 R, 3 RBI, 1 BB

Portland evened the series with two early rallies that cancelled out some early Utica runs. With four runs in the 1st and two in the 2nd the visitors were ahead 6-3 after two, and after that they scored single runs in four other innings that allowed them to withstand a three-run Utica 6th. While Ovaska was PotG, both Dallas Campanelli & Enda Reed had three hits each for Portland.

## GAME THREE (King Field in Portland, ME.)

**UTI 8-3 PORT – Jesse McDermott (P, UTI) CG, 5 HA, 1 ER, 1 K**

In Game Three, Utica took the series lead after effectively ending the contest by the middle of the third inning. With three runs in the 1st, two in the 2nd, and another in the 3rd Utica was ahead 6-0, and those early runs proved to be more than enough as #1 Jesse McDermott was in fine form. Utica only needed eight Hits in victory, with Will Buschmann & Joseph Lindblom finishing with two each.

Utica was now one win from their first NBBO title, and the first for Upstate New York.

**GAME FOUR (King Field in Portland, ME.)**

**UTI 11-6 PORT – Joseph Lindblom (1B, UTI) 2/3 (both 1B), 2 R, 3 RBI, HBP**

There would not be a Portland home win to force a Game Five this year. With the score 4-3 to Portland going into the 7th, Utica took their turn at bat and put forth a six-run rally that came from a variety of sources: a Wild Pitch, a Sacrifice Fly, an Edward Davis Single, a William Cook Single, and a two-run Single by Lindblom. Utica was now ahead 9-4, and after Portland scored twice in B7 to cut the deficit to three Utica cancelled that out with two runs in the top of the 9th.

The Tucker-Wheaton Cup was going to Upstate New York for the first time, something that many felt was long overdue.

**TUCKER-WHEATON CUP MOST VALUABLE PLAYER**

**John Baddley (2B, UTI) - .361 (13/36), .895 OPS, 12 R, 1 2B, 2 3B, 7 RBI, 1 BB, 1 SB, 1.1 WPA, 1x PotG**

It was the Utica player with prior championship experience in both the NBBO & APBL, former St. John's everyday 2B John Baddley, who took MVP honors. He was 9/17 in the final with half a dozen RBI, and he opened the series with a Player of the Game performance.

For Baddley, it marked the end of a season that was the high-point of his seven-year career. He'd earned his first All-Star appearance, set a career high in WAR (2.6), served as the leader of the Utica infield, and now was the MVP of the National Base Ball Organization champions.