

TWC XVIII: TWO FAVORITES IN A FAMILIAR FIELD

NORTHEAST U.S.A. (Aug. 18-31, 1874) – The eighteenth edition of the Tucker-Wheaton Cup playoffs had a familiar feel to it. Five of the six teams in the field took part the previous year, and the other team was making their third appearance in four seasons.

The headliners were the defending champions: Utica B.B.C., who were returning with five more wins than their title-winning 1873 team earned. Their excellent 2B/3B/SS trio from last year was back, as was their outstanding outfield of Felix Brand, William Buschmann, & James Heilman, although Heilman would spend at least the 1st round bye fending off back spasms.

1872 champions Eckford were back after seeing off a fierce challenge from Atlantic in Brooklyn, and 1871 champions Quaker State were back after overcoming a similarly tough Trenton United team in the Coastal Championship. Portland punished their opponents while winning the New England Championship for the fourth straight year, and Metropolitan took New York City again thanks to a ten-game winning streak to end the season.

The only team participating that wasn't in the playoffs last year was this year's overall #1: Susquehanna. They entered the playoffs fresh off a 53-17 season with a +245 Run Differential and a seventeen-game chasm between themselves and 2nd-place Reading in the Inland Championship.

There were two clear favorites from among the six: Susquehanna and Portland, who both finished the season 53-17. Susquehanna had an absurd pitching duo of William Hawk (32-6, 2.00 ERA) & Earl Henry (17-8, 2.86 ERA) and a lineup that had five .300 hitters. Portland had a full half a dozen .300 hitters, the NEL's best defense, and their own star pitching duo of James Dressman (30-9, 2.38 ERA) & Grover Wright (16-7, 2.42 ERA). The problem: both were NEL sides, so only one could make it to the cup final.

Tucker-Wheaton Cup XVIII was a field full of familiarity. At the same time, two of the Northeastern League teams were a clear cut above the rest. Would it be Portland or Susquehanna who lifted the cup? Would Utica repeat? Could Eckford take the cup for the second time in three years? Could Quaker St. overcome consecutive shocks in the League Championship Series to take their second title? Could Metropolitan take their first? It was time to find out.

NEW YORK LEAGUE SEMIFINALS

- GAME 1: MET 13-12 ECK – Ezechiele Cornaro (1B, MET) 3/5, 2B, 3B, 2 R, 1 RBI, 1 BB
- GAME 2: MET 7-6 ECK in 11 – William Simons (LF, MET) 3/6, 3B, 2 R, 0 RBI, SB
- GAME 3: ECK 10-5 MET – Louis Murray (LF, ECK), 3/5 (all 1B), 1 R, 1 RBI, 1 BB, 1 SB
- GAME 4: ECK 7-10 MET – Ezechiele Cornaro (1B, MET) 3/5 (all 1B), 1 R, 2 RBI

The opener at Eckford was back-and-forth. Tied 5-5 after the 4th, Eckford went ahead in the 5th only to see Metro go up 9-6 in the 6th. Eckford then tied it in the 7th, but four more Metro runs in the 8th made it 13-9. Eckford tried to tie it again in the 9th but after three runs a ground ball stranded a man on third, and the visitors won Game One.

Game Two was another thriller. Tied 3-3 after five, the teams traded solo runs twice over the next four innings to force extras. After trading single runs again in the 10th PH William Hurt hit a run-scoring Single, and Metro had a 2-0 series lead.

Game Three was an easy Eckford win – nine runs over the first four innings saw them ahead 9-3, and from there it was just a matter of keeping mistakes to a minimum.

Metropolitan took the series in Game Four, but it wasn't easy. Down 5-0 after five, Eckford put up a seven-run rally in the 6th to take the lead. Metro responded with two runs in the 6th, two more in the 7th, and an insurance run in the 8th to take a three-run lead that wasn't threatened in Eckford's last time at bat.

NORTHEASTERN LEAGUE SEMIFINALS

- GAME 1: QS 5-12 PORT – Jonathan Ovaska (CF, PORT) 3/5 (all 1B), 2 R, 1 RBI
- GAME 2: QS 5-6 PORT – Grover Wright (P, PORT) CG, 11 HA, 3 ER, 1 K, 1/3
- GAME 3: PORT 8-7 QS – Carrick Kennedy (2B, PORT) 2/5, 2B, 1 R, 2 RBI

The first game was an easy Portland home win. Even at 1-1 after three, Quaker St. scored in the top of the 4th but Portland responded with six runs to make it a 7-2, and they were up 9-2 before the visitors could muster any response.

Game Two was closer. Quaker St. struck first with two in the 2nd, but Portland took the lead with four in the 6th before adding two more in the 8th. A valiant visiting rally in the 9th came up just short, a Fly Out stranding men on 2nd & 3rd.

And for the third straight year Portland eliminated Quaker St. A 4-3 game to the home team after six, Portland scored twice in T7 to make it 5-4 and then Quaker St. scored three times to make it a 7-5 game. However, in the top of the 8th Portland scored three more times, the key hit an Alfred Williams two-run Double, to take the lead back and complete the sweep.

NEW YORK LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

- GAME 1: MET 3-13 UTI – Frank Darcy (1B, UTI) 2/4, 2B, SAC BUNT, 2 R, 5 RBI
- GAME 2: MET 3-8 UTI – William Cook (C, UTI) 2/4 (both 1B), 2B, 1 R, 2 RBI
- GAME 3: UTI 2-3 MET – Orville Usher (2B, MET) 3/5 (all 1B), 1 R, 1 RBI, 2 DEF DP
- GAME 4: UTI 9-17 MET – Francis Smith (CF, MET) 4/6 (all 1B), 2 R, 5 RBI
- GAME 5: MET 13-9 UTI – George Brown (RF, MET) 4/6, 3B, 3 R, 2 RBI

To open the NYLCS, Utica scored five runs over the first two innings to go ahead 5-0, and that was more than enough as quality pitching by Rudy Fowler and steady defense kept Metro from threatening while Utica ran up the score.

Game Two was more of the game. Utica again scored five times over the first two innings, and although their lead was 5-1 instead of 5-0 more excellent pitching & defense saw the team through to a 2-0 lead over the New York City champs.

Utica again displayed excellent pitching & defense in Game Three, but their offense sputtered and Metro took advantage, forcing extra innings before C Harold Rowsey hit the game-winning Single in the bottom of the 10th.

Metropolitan forced Game Five with a dominant home win. The hosts scored five times over the first two innings and six more over the 4th & 5th to take an 11-5 lead, and in the bottom of the 7th they wrapped up the win with a six-run rally.

Metropolitan finished the comeback from 0-2 down at Utica. Metro was ahead 8-2 after two innings and looking like they already had tickets to the cup final punched, but a seven-run outburst by Utica over the middle innings turned it into a 9-8 game. In the top of the 8th a Single by Brown and a Double by Francis Smith drove in runs to put Metro in the lead 10-9, and from there they added three more runs in the 9th to spoil Utica's comeback chances and become NYL champions.

NORTHEASTERN LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

- GAME 1: PORT 8-5 SUS – James Dressman (P, PORT) CG, 9 HA, 1 ER, 1 K, 2/4, 2 R
- GAME 2: PORT 4-10 SUS – Walter Braden (RF, SUS) 3/4 (all 1B), 1 R, 4 RBI
- GAME 3: SUS 9-6 PORT – Walter Braden (RF, SUS) 4/6, 2 2B, 2 R, 2 RBI
- GAME 4: SUS 16-3 PORT – John Schultz (CF, SUS) 4/7 (all 1B), 4 R, 3 RBI, 2 SB

Portland took first blood in the battle of the 53-17 teams in Wilkes-Barre. The visitors opened Game One with three tallies in the top of the 1st, and from there Susquehanna was left playing a game of catch-up that they just couldn't win as Dressman kept them at arm's length with both ball and bat.

In Game Two it was Susquehanna who scored early – four times in B1 – to take an early lead and force the opposition to play catch up. By the final inning they had a 10-4 lead, and the gap was simply too much for Portland's valiant four-run rally to erase. The series was tied 1-1.

Game Three in Portland was a game of twos. Susquehanna scored twice in the 1st, 5th, 7th, & 8th, while Portland scored twice in the 3rd, 6th, & 8th. A single run in the top of the 9th meant Susquehanna were deserved 9-6 winners, and Braden took PoG honors for the second time in a row with another stellar performance.

Portland would not get another crack at lifting the Tucker-Wheaton Cup. One run in T1 followed by eight more in T2 put Susquehanna ahead 9-0 early in Game Four, and from there steady pitching by William Hawk made sure there would be no scare for the visitors.

TUCKER-WHEATON CUP XVIII FINAL

It was time for the final of Tucker-Wheaton Cup XVIII.

Susquehanna would enter the series as clear favorites, given that they dispatched their fellow 53-17 team, Portland, in just four games in the NEL Championship Series. Still, counting the final two weeks of the season Metropolitan was 16-3 over their previous nineteen games and thus was a serious threat.

Either way, one team would be lifting the cup for the first time.

GAME ONE (River View Field in Wilkes-Barre, Penn.)
MET 8-12 SUS – Walter Braden (RF, SUS) 3/5, HR, 2 R, 3 RBI

It took some work, but Susquehanna did the expected and won the opener.

Behind 4-1 after two, Metro proceeded to score three runs in both the 3rd & 4th to take a 7-4 lead. However, that lead was short-lived as Susquehanna scored once in the 4th and then five times in the 5th to go ahead 10-7. Metro scored in the top of the 7th to make it a two-run contest, but Braden's two-run homer in B7 put the game away for the hosts.

GAME TWO (River View Field in Wilkes-Barre, Penn.)
MET 3-19 SUS – Joseph Jurski (1B, SUS) 4/6, 3B, 1 R, 3 RBI

Susquehanna put Metropolitan under a steamroller to go up 2-0.

After four innings it looked like Metro might have a chance as the score was 5-2 to the hosts, but Susquehanna then scored twice in the 5th, six times in the 6th, and six more times in the 7th to turn that 5-2 into a 19-2 lead. Aside from Jurski, 2B Will Gillete (3/6, 4 R, 1 RBI) also had a notable performance with the bat for Susquehanna.

GAME THREE (Hamilton Square in New York City)
SUS 8-7 MET in 10 – Ellis Smith (C, SUS) 3/3, 2B, 1 R, 1 RBI

There would be no 0-2 comeback for Metropolitan like in the previous series.

Susquehanna had the early lead: 4-0 by the middle of the 2nd. Metropolitan then chipped away at it, with two runs in the 2nd followed by single runs in the 5th & 6th evening the score. In the top of the 7th Susquehanna took the lead 6-4 on an Error and a Single by Smith. Metro then scored a run in B8 that was cancelled out by the visitors in T9, and the score was 7-5 going into Metro's final chance to extend the season.

With two out in B9, Metro RF George Brown delivered a two-run Single that tied the game 6-6 and forced extra innings. In the top of the 10th fifteen-year veteran 3B Bertrand Sargent put Susquehanna back in the lead with a one-run Single, and William Hawk, author of a historic season, shut down Metro from there.

The NBBO's best team in 1874 had swept the Tucker Wheaton Cup final, becoming champions for the first time.

TUCKER-WHEATON CUP MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

Ellis Smith (C, SUS) – 7 G, .500 (15/30), 1.133 OPS, 6 R, 4 2B, 6 RBI, 0.6 WPA, 0.4 WAR, 2/6 RTO

Ellis Smith was an unlikely choice for TWC Most Valuable Player. He was 7/12 in the cup final with three RBI, with four Susquehanna batsmen driving in more runs than him. Smith also played in just 49 games during the season, batting .313 (.677 OPS) with 31 RBI.

The Writers Pool felt that his clutch hitting, combined with his defensive work and expert handling of Susquehanna's star pitchers, was deserving of the trophy over teammate Walter Braden, who took Player of the Game honors in three of the team's seven outings this postseason.

TUCKER-WHEATON CUP FINAL SUMMARY

Susquehanna Baseball Club win series, 3 to 0.

Game 1: Susquehanna Baseball Club defeat Metropolitan Base Ball Club, 12 to 8:

Tucker-Wheaton Cup Game 1 Goes to Susquehanna Baseball Club, Thanks to Braden

W: I. Noble (1-0) L: R. Majors (0-1)

HR - SUS: W. Braden (1)

Boxscore Game Log

Game 2: Susquehanna Baseball Club defeat Metropolitan Base Ball Club, 19 to 3:

Susquehanna Baseball Club Over Metropolitan Base Ball Club in 19-3 Romp

W: E. Henry (1-0) L: R. Majors (0-2)

HR - None

Boxscore Game Log

Game 3: Susquehanna Baseball Club defeat Metropolitan Base Ball Club, 8 to 7:

Susquehanna Baseball Club Sweep Tucker-Wheaton Cup

W: W. Hawk (1-0) L: R. Majors (0-3)

HR - None

Boxscore Game Log

Series MVP: C Ellis Smith (Susquehanna Baseball Club)