

THE FOURTH LIBERTY BELL CLASSIC

THE TWO MOST DOMINANT TEAMS IN LEAGUE HISTORY REPEAT LAST YEAR'S SERIES

PHILADELPHIA (August 16, 1876) – The third Liberty Bell Classic ended up like the first two: with Frankford Arsenal going down to the best that West Philadelphia had to offer, this time losing the deciding Game Five in agonizing fashion as Philadelphia B.C.C. put up an eight-run rally in the bottom of the 8th to turn a 6-3 Frankford lead into a 9-6 final and P.B.C.C.'s first city championship. This year's L.B.C. involved the same two teams, but would it go differently?

EAST PHILADELPHIA – Frankford Arsenal had the second-best season in league history, finishing 52-18 with a +241 RD (+3.4 R/G), but it still wasn't enough for Home Field Advantage in the L.B.C. They were already ahead of the rest of the East by ten games on July 1st, and in the end finished sixteen games ahead of second-place Keystone.

FRANKFORD ARSENAL'S KEY PLAYERS

- Joseph Evans (CF): .404, **1.028 OPS**, 101 R, 133 H, **23 2B, 18 3B**, 79 RBI, **24 BB**, 18 SB, **192 TB**, **8.1 WPA**, **6.0 WAR**
- Jonathan Toppin (2B): .341, .877 OPS, **103 R**, 120 H, 22 2B, 17 3B, 0 HR, 70 RBI, 10 BB, 33 SB, 5.1 WPA, 4.7 WAR
- Joseph Lawson (P): 29-9, 2.02 ERA, 63 K, 347.0 IP, 28 CG, 0 SHO, 2.2 K/BB, 1.21 WHIP, 4.5 WAR, 2.9 rWAR

WEST PHILADELPHIA – Philadelphia B.C.C. (55-15, +255 RD) had a 29-6 opening half to the season, and from there it was just a matter of counting the days until the start of the L.B.C. Not that they slouched during August – P.B.C.C. won their final ten games to finish fifteen clear of main rivals Merion atop the standings at the end of a record-setting season.

PHILADELPHIA BASEBALL & CRICKET CLUB'S KEY PLAYERS

- Frederick Pike (2B): .386, .953 OPS, 84 R, 129 H, 18 2B, 17 3B, 1 HR, **82 RBI**, 5 BB, 36 SB, 5.0 WPA, 4.7 WAR
- Moody Steiger (SS): .241, .566 OPS, 73 R, 75 H, 6 2B, 4 3B, 2 HR, 42 RBI, 18 SB, **+33.6 ZR**, 2.0 WPA, 2.7 WAR
- Robert Benson (P): **33-9**, **1.84 ERA**, **103 K**, **362.1 IP**, **34 GC**, 1 SHO, 2.9 K/BB, 1.05 WHIP, 6.4 WAR, **10.9 rWAR**

The teams that had far and away the best seasons in P.C.B.L. history would be taking part in a repeat of last year's L.B.C. Defending champs P.B.C.C. would be favorites by virtue of their ten-game winning run to end the season, but could Frankford finally lift the cup on their fourth try?

WRITERS POOL PREDICTION

L.B.C. FINAL: #1 Philadelphia B.C.C. (10-0 L10, 31-4 Home) over #2 Frankford Arsenal

- Series projected to go five games

L.B.C. MOST VALUABLE PLAYER: Robert Benson (P, P.B.C.C.)

GAME ONE (Willow Grove Cricket Grounds): FRA 14-10 PBCC
P.o.t.G. CF Joseh Evans (FRA) 4/5 (all 1B), 2 R, 2 RBI, 1 BB, 3 SB

P.B.C.C. had the best season in league history thanks to its pitching & defense, and both fell flat in Game One. Stuningly, Benson allowed a season high of 14 Hits & 9 ER over 6 2/3 innings while the defense committed 10 Errors. Evans was outstanding, RF James Howard hit a Home Run in the 4th, and Frankford never relinquished the lead after they went ahead 5-3 in the top of the 2nd.

GAME TWO (Willow Grove Cricket Grounds): FRA 7-12 PBCC
P.o.t.G. C Harrison Hearst (PBCC) 3/5 (2 2B, 4 TB), 2 R, 1 RBI

P.B.C.C. again didn't have great pitching or defense but they were good enough, and their offense delivered as the home side evened the series. The key innings were the 2nd & 3rd, during which P.B.C.C. scored nine runs on a bunch of Singles & Errors to take total control of the contest. Later, LF Walter Kirby hit a two-run Home Run during the 5th inning to put the hosts ahead 12-1. The P.B.C.C. win overshadowed a 5/5 day (2 2B, 2 R, 1 RBI) by Frankford 2B Jonathan Toppin.

GAME THREE (Frankford Park): PBCC 8-9 FRA
P.o.t.G. 2B Frederick Pike (PBCC) 3/5 (3B, 5 TB), 3 R, 2 RBI, SB
NOTABLE: CF Robert Chase (PBCC) 4/5 (all 1B), 2 R, 1 RBI, SB

This game looked like a P.B.C.C. win for most of eight innings. The visitors had a 6-4 lead halfway through the contest, and a two-run Single by sub LF Henry Griffin in T6 gave P.B.C.C. an 8-4 lead that looked sure to stand. However, in B7 a Single by RF James Howard and Double by Joseph Evans cut the deficit to two, and after a scoreless 8th Frankford came to bat in the 9th and stole the win when a run-scoring Error and a run-scoring Wild Pitch were followed by a run-scoring Single from 2B Jonathan Toppin that plated sub LF William Walker to give Frankford the 2-1 series lead.

GAME FOUR (Frankford Park): PBCC 5-9 FRA
P.o.t.G. 2B Jonathan Toppin (FRA) 3/5 (2 2B, 5 TB), 2 R, 2 RBI, SB

This time, it was Frankford's turn to win the Liberty Bell Classic with a late rally. After the teams took turns scoring over the first four innings it was 5-4 to Frankford. In the top of the 7th PH Henry Griffin hit a one-run Single to tie the game, and both teams went scoreless during their next time at bat. Frankford then responded with the best inning in team history, considering the circumstances.

PH George Estes began B8 by hitting an easy fly ball to RF for the first out. He was followed by William Walker, another PH, who hit a Double. Then, 3B James Montouro grabbed a bat and hit an Inside the Park Home Run with the first pitch he saw from Arthur Lipscomb to give Frankford a 7-5 lead. C Roger Thomas kept the rally going with a Double and, after P Charlie Greiner struck out, he was driven in by a Double from Toppin to make it 8-5. RF James Howard sent Toppin around with a Single to make it 9-5, and the outcome was now in Frankford's hands. P.B.C.C. sent batsmen to second & third in the top of the 9th, but with two out 3B Charles Hunt hit into a Fielder's Choice and the series was over.

On their fourth try, Frankford Arsenal had won the city championship they'd been desperately hoping for, a fitting outcome given that it was almost certainly Joseph Evans' last game in a Frankford uniform. For Philadelphia Baseball & Cricket Club, which just had the best regular season in league history, it was the most bitter of defeats.

LIBERTY BELL CLASSIC MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

2B Jonathan Toppin (FRA) – .550 (11/20), 8 RBI, 5 R, 5 2B, 1 BB, 1 RBI, , 0.8 WPA, 0.5 WAR, 1x PotG

Joseph Evans had an excellent series (8/18, 6 RBI, 4 R, 2 2B, 1 3B, 1 BB, 4 SB), but Toppin was truly outstanding in the L.B.C. and he played a key part in the Game Four rally that won the series. It marked the end of the best of Toppin's three seasons in Philadelphia, one in which he'd improved from a quality 2B to a brilliant one. SS Burton Hyde also played performed very well (7/16, 2 RBI, 4 R, 2 2B, 1 3B).

The best P.B.C.C. player was, surprisingly, 1B Jerald Schneider (6/16, 6 RBI, 5 R, 1 2B, 1 BB). Record-shattering pitcher Robert Benson struggled significantly (0-0, 10.67 ERA, 2 K, 14.1 IP, 25 HA, 1.95 WHIP, -0.2 WAR), which absolutely nobody saw coming. Had Benson pitched even moderately below the mighty standard he set during the season, odds are P.B.C.C. would have pulled out a series victory in five games.

LIBERTY BELL CLASSIC SUMMARY

Frankford Arsenal win series, 3 to 1.

Game 1: Frankford Arsenal defeat Philadelphia B.C.C., 14 to 10:

Road Win Lifts Frankford Arsenal to 1-0 Lead in LBC

W: C. Shultis (1-0) L: C. Booth (0-1)

HR - FRA: J. Howard (1)

Boxscore Game Log

Game 2: Philadelphia B.C.C. defeat Frankford Arsenal, 12 to 7:

Raucous Willow Grove Cricket Grounds Crowd Propels Philadelphia B.C.C. to 12-7 Victory, Series Tied at 1

W: A. Lipscomb (1-0) L: C. Greiner (0-1)

HR - PBCC: W. Kirby (1)

Boxscore Game Log

Game 3: Frankford Arsenal defeat Philadelphia B.C.C., 9 to 8:

Frankford Arsenal Rally Past Philadelphia B.C.C. for 2-1 Series Lead

W: C. Shultis (2-0) L: C. Booth (0-2)

HR - None

Boxscore Game Log

Game 4: Frankford Arsenal defeat Philadelphia B.C.C., 9 to 5:

Frankford Arsenal Tops Philadelphia B.C.C.

W: C. Greiner (1-1) L: A. Lipscomb (1-1)

HR - FRA: J. Montuoro (1)

Boxscore Game Log

Series MVP: 2B Jonathan Toppin (Frankford Arsenal)