

THE 1861 TUCKER-WHEATON CUP

DEFENDING CHAMPS KINGS COUNTY TAKE ON DEBUTANTS ALLEGHANY

BROOKLYN, N.Y. & PITTSBURGH, PENN. (Late August, 1860) – The final series of the 1861 season featured one team looking to take home the Tucker-Wheaton Cup for the second year in a row, and one team who had never played for it before: Kings County B.B.C. & Alleghany B.C.

As in 1860, Kings County waited for the New York League Semi-final to play out before starting their postseason run. The semi-final winner was first-time playoff entrants Gotham, who scored 46 runs over their three wins against Syracuse. The playoff newcomers proceeded to give K.C. everything they could handle over five games, with K.C. needing to score in the double figures twice to make it to a fifth game, where they scored three in the bottom of the ninth – the winning run via Passed Ball – to make it to the Tucker-Wheaton Cup by the skin of their teeth.

Alleghany had the home field advantage for the Northeastern League Semi-final, and they needed it. Up 2-1 on Trenton they were thumped 11-3 in Game Four, but at home for Game Five they responded to a 7-7 tie after six innings by scoring once in the seventh and holding Trenton from there to advance. In the N.E.L. Championship Series they did the same thing Scranton did last year: stun everyone by winning Games 1 & 2 at St. John's. The 12-0 Game Two win was especially jarring. However, like last year St. John's roared back with a big Game Three win to set up a Game Four with a lot of déjà vu present. In the end, Alleghany was able to beat back the onrushing tides of fate and best St. John's 12-11 in eleven innings to make it to the T.W.C. for the first time.

The 1861 Tucker-Wheaton Cup was a contest between the defending champions – a team with a scary lineup and the best pitcher in the N.B.B.O. – and a team that allowed fewer runs than any other team in the N.E.L. while committing the second-fewest errors. On paper this seemed like a matchup between elite offense and elite defense, with Kings County favored because they were defending cup champs and it was the New York League's turn for home field advantage. Would K.C. ride those twin advantages to another cup win?

1861 TUCKER WHEATON CUP: [Kings County B.B.C. \(N.Y.L.\) defeats Alleghany B.C. \(N.E.L.\) 3-2](#)

- Game 1: ALL 9-10 K.C. – P.o.t.G: Soren Thomsen (RF, K.C.); 2/5, 2 R, 4 RBI
- Game 2: ALL 11-4 K.C. – P.o.t.G: Joe Blake (SS, ALL); 4/5, 2 2B, HR, 3 R, 5 RBI, 1 DEF DP
- Game 3: K.C. 5-4 ALL – P.o.t.G: Per Olaf Bakken (SS, K.C.); 4/6, 1 RBI, 2 SB
 - Game went 10 innings
- Game 4: K.C. 3-4 ALL – P.o.t.G: Eddie Morse (P, ALL); CG, 6 H, 3 R/0 ER, 3 K, 99 PIT
- Game 5: ALL 3-5 K.C. – P.o.t.G: Per Olaf Bakken (SS, K.C.); 3/5, 2B, 2 R, 1 RBI, SB, 1 DEF DP
- M.V.P.: Per Olaf Bakken (SS, K.C.) – 10/23 (.435), 2 2B, 6 R, 2 RBI, 3 SB
- NOTABLE: 3/5 games in series decided by one run, another game decided by two

YES, but they needed every bit of the N.Y.L.'s home field advantage to win the series. This year's T.W.C. was truly a back-and-forth affair, with the two teams alternating victories over the five games. Three of the five were decided by a single run, and Game Five had a two-run margin. Kings County had the M.V.P., but Alleghany had the batters with the highest average and most R.B.I. K.C. had the highest-profile pitcher, but Alleghany had the pitcher who put up the best results of the series. Kings County exited the series as repeat N.B.B.O. champions, but it EASILY could have gone Alleghany's way.

GAME ONE – The opener in Brooklyn was a lively one early. Kings County scored three runs in the first, but Alleghany countered with four in the second and two more in the third to take a 6-3 lead after the early innings. After that, there was not much until the ninth, with lone K.C. runs in the fifth & eighth making it a 6-5 game. Alleghany scored three times in their half of the ninth to take a seemingly unassailable 9-5 lead, but K.C. scored FIVE in the bottom half and won the game on a two-run single by pinch hitter Franklin Groth. Alleghany were able to chase Grover Wright out of the opener after just four innings, but they were unable to make the most of a golden chance to start the series with a win.

GAME TWO – Kings County again started the scoring in the first, and they were 3-0 up after three innings. Alleghany woke up in the middle portion and battered Wright around once more, scoring three times in the fifth, twice in the sixth, and four more times in the eighth to take a 9-3 lead. They increased the margin to 11-3 in the ninth before K.C. ended the contest with a consolation run.

GAME THREE – With the series in Pittsburgh tied 1-1, Alleghany now had the home field advantage. However, it did not look to mean much as Kings County were enjoying a 4-0 lead after six innings thanks to steady work from Grover Wright,

who was starting for the third game in a row. Alleghany were yet again able to find a way to break him down and leveled the score over the seventh & eighth, forcing extra innings. In the top of the tenth Per Olaf Bakken singled in Walter Goss to give K.C. the lead. In the bottom half Alleghany had men on second & third with two out but they went no further.

GAME FOUR – Another airtight contest in Pittsburgh. After each team scored once over the first three innings, Alleghany took the lead with a run in their half of the fifth only for Kings County to counter with two in the top half of the sixth to take a 3-2 lead. Alleghany tied the score in the sixth before taking the lead in the seventh via Harold Miller double that plated Charles Smalley. From there, Charles Morse and the defense held K.C. to the minimum six batters over the final two innings to even the series and force a Game Five in Brooklyn.

GAME FIVE – The cup-decider was back in Brooklyn, with Grover Wright starting for the fourth time in the series. This time, the pitcher who set multiple records during the 1861 season got it right. While holding Alleghany scoreless over the first six innings, the Kings County batsmen sent three home to take a 3-0 lead going into the final stanzas of 1861. Alleghany made it 3-2 after a throwing error on a steal attempt allowed runs to score from second & third, but the K.C. attack responded with two in their half of the seventh. Up 5-2, Wright would allow one run in the top of the eighth and that was it. Kings County had won the Tucker-Wheaton Cup for the second year in a row.

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER – Unlike last year, when Jerald Peterson torched opposing pitching, there was no standout batter for the victorious Kings County team in the cup series. Ultimately, the M.V.P. award went to shortstop Per Olaf Bakken, who was 10/23 with six runs, three stolen bases, important hits, and excellent defense. There were other K.C. batters who drove in more runs, but none hit like Bakken. Grover Wright started four games, but he struggled in three of them.

Had Alleghany taken the series, they had three very worthy M.V.P. candidates. Eddie Morse won both of his starts while allowing three Earned Runs over eighteen innings. Outfielder Hank Skolnik had the highest average of any player at .588 (10/17), scored four runs, and drove in four. There was also star shortstop Joe Blake, who hit .476 (10/21) with half a dozen runs & R.B.I. each while capping off his memorable Game Two performance with an Inside-the-Park Home Run.

This was perhaps the most even Tucker-Wheaton Cup series yet. With the teams alternating wins and nearly every game being decided by one or two runs, it was a thrilling five-game affair. Had some breaks gone the other way, this article would be celebrating Alleghany's first time lifting the Tucker-Wheaton Cup. Instead, it is celebrating Kinga County's continued dominance.