

THE 1862 N.B.B.O. PREVIEW

WRIGHT'S MOVE CHANGES NEW YORK; NEW RULES IN PLACE; A NEW PLAYOFF FORMAT

NORTHEAST U.S.A. (May 7, 1862) – The newest season of the National Base Ball Organization begins today, with the first two games taking place shortly after noon: Scranton at Susquehanna & Gotham at Mutual. But...before a ball is even put into play this year the N.B.B.O. will see some big changes.

Grover Wright stunned the baseball establishment after the end of the 1861 season when he announced, weeks after setting multiple N.B.B.O. records while leading Kings County to their second consecutive Tucker-Wheaton Cup triumph, he was moving with his family to Buffalo and joining Niagara B.B.C. That change of address has seemingly tilted the balance of power in New York base ball, and it will be reflected in the Writers Pool's projected standings for the New York League.

Pitchers are no longer as free to try to goad batsmen into swinging at balls pitched well outside of hittable realms, as the N.B.B.O. Executive Committee has introduced the Called Ball to complement the Called Strike. This, in addition to a second Pitching Line that joins the existing one to make up the brand-new "Pitcher's Area", has been put in place to speed up games and force pitchers to be more honest in their deliveries.

Batters will see their work changed as well, although only slightly. Those who prefer to come to the plate with extremely wide bats are out of luck this season, as the first restrictions on wood bats have been put in place. Starting today bats must be no more than 2.5 inches in diameter although length, shape, & width are still open to whatever the player desires.

Finally, the playoffs will be radically different this season. After complaints from the two toughest regional championships – New York City & Coastal – the road to the Tucker-Wheaton Cup will now involve all six entrants being places in one group and playing each other twice, and the team with the best ten-game record lifting the cup.

As always, the Writers Pool has offered their prognostications & opinions on the season ahead, and they are below.

PROJECTED NEW YORK LEAGUE STANDINGS

BROOKLYN	W	L	PCT	GB	R	RA	N.Y.C.	W	L	PCT	GB	R	RA
Excelsior	42	28	.600	--	485	419	Orange	42	28	.600	--	574	461
Kings County	39	31	.557	3	503	434	Gotham	39	31	.557	3	533	492
Continental	38	32	.543	4	472	453	Mutual	39	31	.557	3	565	529
Atlantic	37	35	.529	5	467	503	Harlem	37	33	.529	5	473	493
Eckford	35	35	.500	7	453	464	Knickerbocker	34	36	.486	8	460	477
Empire	31	36	.443	11	467	507	Union	33	37	.471	9	490	543
Nassau Co.	31	37	.443	11	465	493	Hilltop	29	41	.414	13	401	452
Bedford	29	48	.414	13	452	493	Metropolitan	29	41	.414	13	442	490

UPSTATE	W	L	PCT	GB	R	RA
Niagara	41	29	.586	--	605	511
Victory	40	30	.571	1	525	495
Eagle	37	33	.529	4	512	505
Flour City	36	34	.514	5	552	527
Syracuse	36	34	.514	5	511	533
Minuteman	34	36	.486	7	480	504
Utica	34	36	.486	7	514	481
Binghamton	23	47	.329	18	486	628

It is clear from a look at the projected standings that the Writers Pool believes Grover Wright's move upstate has shifted the balance of power across the entire state of New York. Kings County is still expected to have a very good attack, but without Wright the Excelsior squad that features the still-maturing Jim Creighton are now favorites to take the more competitive Brooklyn Championship. Meanwhile, Niagara are favorites for the Upstate Championship after finishing third last year. New York City is expected to be extremely competitive as always, though it is quite a surprise to see the Knickerbocker Club expected to finish, nearly ten games out of first place. The main complaint about their squad is the lack of batting talent outside of Albert Jones and Zarek Polakowski.

PROJECTED NORTHEASTERN LEAGUE STANDINGS

COASTAL	W	L	PCT	GB	R	RA	INLAND	W	L	PCT	GB	R	RA
Shamrock	47	23	.671	--	503	398	Reading Ath.	44	26	.629	--	520	400
Mass. Bay	45	25	.643	2	594	452	Alleghany	39	31	.557	5	493	446
American	39	31	.557	8	552	491	Merrimack Mills	39	31	.557	5	473	439
Olympic	32	38	.457	15	454	537	Scranton	36	34	.514	8	474	435
Trenton Utd.	32	38	.457	15	452	491	Susquehanna	36	34	.514	8	450	456
Newark	30	40	.429	17	461	506	Sportsman's	35	35	.500	9	448	485
Port Jersey	29	41	.414	18	529	571	Lake Erie	29	41	.414	15	392	450
Quaker St.	28	42	.400	19	461	559	Pioneer	25	45	.357	19	383	503

N ENGLAND	W	L	PCT	GB	R	RA
St. John's	48	22	.686	--	652	460
S.o.t.O.	42	28	.600	6	512	458
Green Mtn.	37	33	.529	11	477	448
Granite	34	36	.486	14	486	485
Oceanic	32	38	.457	16	489	504
Portland	30	40	.429	18	448	519
Cantabrigians	29	41	.414	19	452	584
Quinnipiac	29	41	.414	19	472	529

Not surprisingly, Shamrock is expected back on top in Coastal. They were predicted to take it once again last year but finished 2nd to Trenton United. What is surprising is how top-heavy the Costal is expected to be, as the Writers Pool believes the two Boston clubs have pulled away from their big-city brethren in both talent & organization, and that includes the two Philadelphian clubs. Reading is expected to continue to perform well above their resources, but should they falter even a little bit then the Alleghany Club is expected to be right there and ready to take the Inland Championship. St. John's, of course, is expected to win the New England Championship by more than a handful of games. This year, the Writers Pool expects their batsmen to score an eye-watering 9.3 runs per contest, easily the most in the N.B.B.O.

WRITERS POOL GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

When asked for general observations about the upcoming season, here were the main talking points offered up by the 48-member N.B.B.O. Writers Pool:

- The ten most talented batsmen in the N.B.B.O: Edward Huntley (SS, ORA), Anthony Mascherino (SS, G.M.), Konrad Jensen (RF, STJ), Willie Davis (CF, SUS), Samuel Kessler (3B, S.o.t.O.), William Johnson (CF, STJ), Jerald Peterson (3B, K.C.), Anderson MacGyver (2B, STJ), Leslie Arnett (2B, M.M.), Alistair Jones (CF, MUT)
- The ten best pitchers in the N.B.B.O: Jim Creighton (EXC), Grover Wright (NIA), Clydesdale Jackson (HAR), Carl Bancroft (UTI), Joe Cunningham (SHA), Jonathan Jenkins (KNI), Archie Green (G.M.), Raine v. d. Hout (ORA), John Brinson (ATL), William Jones (M.M.)
- The ten best newcomers in the N.B.B.O: Enda Reed (26 y/o 1B, SHA), Luther Tatum (24 y/o LF, NIA), Tibor Racz (27 y/o LF, M.B.), Archie Mask (26 y/o CF, EXC), Henry Brown (25 y/o SS, MET), Wagner Morris (24 y/o CF, BING), Jesse Monroe (29 y/o SS, SHA), Joe Devers (26 y/o 2B, HILL), Victor Hansen (23 y/o SS, AME), Lars Kelson (24 y/o CF, S.o.t.O.)
- Based on his ridiculous .521 average over 17 exhibition games in April, Willie Davis is the favorite to win the New England League Batsman of the Year for the third year in a row. It seems unthinkable that he could continue to improve with the bat, but Davis is 25 and it appears he has added to his extraordinary abilities. One has to think that it is only a matter of time before he goes back home to Philadelphia and plays for American or Quaker St.
- Shamrock B.B.C. is considered the most talented team in the N.B.B.O. and the favorites for the Tucker-Wheaton Cup. The W.P.'s Player Ranking Survey placed Shamrock in the top ten at seven positions: C (8th), 1B (2nd), 2B (3rd), LF (1st), CF (5th), RF (9th), and P (6th). Irish newcomer Enda Reed (1B) is expected to immediately establish himself as one of the best batsmen in the sport, while fellow newcomer Jesse Monroe (SS) is considered a potential Golden Glove winner.
- Grover Wright is, of course, the reason why Niagara B.B.C. is expected to win the Upstate N.Y. Championship. However, there are some questions about how quickly he will adjust to pitching in the most batter-friendly park in the

entire N.B.B.O. Kings County's Washington Park was not cavernous, but there is no other venue like the Greater New York Sporting Grounds. 3.5-star newcomer Luther Tatum – Contact 65, Gap Power 75 – is expected to be another new Niagara member to play a major role in a first-place finish in Upstate.

- Jim Creighton, now 21 years old, has continued to improve his control – now rated 70 as opposed to 45 two years ago – and this improvement in control of the ball should see him become the superstar that many thought he would become when Excelsior signed him. He is the main factor in Excelsior being projected to win the Brooklyn championship, although the improvement of second-year 3B Wesley Leone and the play of 3.5-star newcomer Archie Mask will also be factors.
- St. John's appears ready to unleash Nelson Townsend, the five-star batting prospect signed ahead of the 1861 season. He started 16 April exhibition games at LF, with William Johnson starting those games in CF and five-year CF Richard Kenton benched. He's just 21, but STJ manager Todd Rogers stated that Townsend will bat fifth in the order, right behind Anderson MacGyver. If the St. John's coaches feel that Townsend is ready, then he is probably ready.
- The Alleghany Club has more overall talent, but the well-run Reading Athletic is projected to win the Inland Championship because they have top-five stars at three positions – Dag Nielsen at C, Stanford Topps at 3B, Leslie Wolf at RF – and some quality bats to support them. However, they have a couple of positions at which they are graded in the bottom quarter in the N.B.B.O. and their pitching is lacking, and that could be their undoing.
- The Orange Club is projected to be the New York City champions, but the reality is that N.Y.C. is a crapshoot. They have major issues at CF & RF, and at a couple of other positions they are just okay. The others projected in the top four – Gotham, Mutual, & Harlem – all have that same issue: great talent at some positions, okay at others, glaring holes at a couple. Any of them could finish first. Knickerbocker actually has the fewest weak spots, but their lineup is so tilted toward pitching & defense that nobody is sure where the offense will come from aside from the duo of Jones & Polakowski.
- The addition of the Called Ball should not lead to an explosion of offense because it will be offset a bit by limits on how wide bats can be. However, in Brooklyn & N.Y.C., which collectively have big parks and the best pitching, offense should be expected to increase quite a bit.