Six division races and two wild cards after the August challenge

The Desk | Action Baseball League | 1981-08-31 | Games through 1981-08-30

The August Division Challenges added 121 verified finals, including the completion of the previously unfinished St. Louis–Houston game. The regular-season ledger now has 1,571 finals through August 30. St. Louis led the window at 9–2. Atlanta and Philadelphia went 8–2. Detroit, Tampa Bay and New York each went 1–9.

Below, the first record is through August 19, the second through August 30. The bracketed record covers August 20–30. Games back compares each club with the leader at the same cutoff.

NBC East

Charlotte Colonels 69–52 (0 GB) → 73–58 (0 GB) [4–6]

Miami Hurricanes 64–56 (4.5 GB) → 71–59 (1.5 GB) [7–3]

Atlanta Kings 55–66 (14 GB) → 63–68 (10 GB) [8–2]

Tampa Bay Storm 53–68 (16 GB) → 54–77 (19 GB) [1–9]

Miami swept Charlotte and reduced the margin from four and a half games to one and a half. Atlanta won three of four from Miami, split with Charlotte and swept Tampa Bay. It played a part in the race even from third. Miami visits Phoenix beginning August 31, Charlotte hosts Chicago beginning September 1, and the Hurricanes get four more directly against Charlotte there September 24–27.

NBC Central

Dallas Rustlers 66–55 (0 GB) → 72–59 (0 GB) [6–4]

Chicago Fire 64–57 (2 GB) → 71–60 (1 GB) [7–3]

Detroit Dukes 65–56 (1 GB) → 66–65 (6 GB) [1–9]

Minneapolis Blizzard 54–66 (11.5 GB) → 60–70 (11.5 GB) [6–4]

Dallas swept defending champion Detroit and went into September a game ahead of Chicago. The Fire gained a game on Dallas over the full challenge and moved from third to second. Minneapolis finished 6–4 after taking three of four from Dallas and both games from Detroit. The Rustlers visit Chicago September 21–22 and host the Fire October 1–4.

NBC West

Phoenix Firebirds 64–57 (0 GB) → 70–61 (0 GB) [6–4]

San Francisco Warriors 64–57 (0 GB) → 69–62 (1 GB) [5–5]

Los Angeles Cobras 62–59 (2 GB) → 68–63 (2 GB) [6–4]

San Diego Seraphs 45–76 (19 GB) → 48–83 (22 GB) [3–7]

Phoenix broke the August 19 tie by taking three of four at San Francisco. The Warriors' three wins in four against Los Angeles kept them a game back. The Cobras are still two back despite sweeping San Diego and going 6–4 overall. Each pair of the top three still meets. San Francisco visits Los Angeles September 24–27 and hosts Phoenix September 28–30. Phoenix also has six with Los Angeles, including four to finish the schedule.

ABC East

Boston Patriots 61–60 (0 GB) → 68–63 (0 GB) [7–3]

Philadelphia Fury 57–64 (4 GB) → 65–66 (3 GB) [8–2]

Pittsburgh Express 54–67 (7 GB) → 58–73 (10 GB) [4–6]

New York Aces 53–68 (8 GB) → 54–77 (14 GB) [1–9]

Boston and Philadelphia split four at Boston. Philadelphia won all six of its remaining challenge games and shaved one game off Boston's lead. Pittsburgh finished ten back after losing both games to Philadelphia and three of four to Boston. New York lost nine straight after winning the opener. Boston opens September at Houston and Philadelphia at Las Vegas. The contenders meet at Boston again September 28–30.

ABC Central

Houston Mavericks 72–48 (0 GB) → 75–56 (0 GB) [3–8]

Cincinnati Cougars 63–58 (9.5 GB) → 67–64 (8 GB) [4–6]

St. Louis Stallions 58–62 (14 GB) → 67–64 (8 GB) [9–2]

Nashville Blues 59–62 (13.5 GB) → 64–67 (11 GB) [5–5]

St. Louis used five wins over Houston and three over Cincinnati to draw level with the Cougars for second. It gained six games on Houston. Cincinnati went 4–6 and still gained a game and a half. Houston kept an eight-game lead by winning its final two against Nashville. The Blues split with all three division opponents. Cincinnati and St. Louis meet September 24–27, Houston goes to St. Louis September 28–30, and Cincinnati has six games left with Houston.

ABC West

Las Vegas Gamblers 69–52 (0 GB) → 72–59 (0 GB) [3–7]

Denver Rocketeers 66–55 (3 GB) → 71–60 (1 GB) [5–5]

Seattle Comets 64–57 (5 GB) → 71–60 (1 GB) [7–3]

Portland Lumberjacks 49–72 (20 GB) → 54–77 (18 GB) [5–5]

Las Vegas’s lead over Denver shrank from three to one, and its advantage over Seattle from five to one. Seattle won three of four against Las Vegas and tied the Gamblers before the last day. Denver won both games against Las Vegas, then won the last two at Seattle to pull even with the Comets. Portland took three of four at Denver and split four with Las Vegas. All three contenders play one another again by October 4.

Wild cards and the DCS under the 1981 rules

Each conference sends three division winners and its best remaining club. Miami is 71–59, half a game ahead of Chicago (71–60), two and a half ahead of San Francisco (69–62), three and a half ahead of Los Angeles (68–63), and five and a half ahead of Detroit (66–65). Detroit held the wild-card position on August 19.

Denver and Seattle are tied at 71–60 in the ABC, four games in front of both Cincinnati and St. Louis and six ahead of Philadelphia. Denver held the wild-card position alone on August 19. The standings supply no official decision between Denver and Seattle.

If the season ended on these records, Charlotte would be the NBC’s top seed and Miami its wild card. The same-division protection would pair Charlotte with Phoenix and Dallas with Miami. In the ABC, Houston would face the Denver–Seattle wild-card survivor, with Las Vegas facing Boston. The August standings establish position. The remaining schedule and any official tiebreak determine the field.

Roster expansion and September assignments

Twenty-two clubs have 31 games listed. Miami and Minneapolis have 32. Eight games are scheduled for August 31. Miami at Phoenix crosses a wild-card leader with a division leader, Detroit at San Francisco brings two NBC chasers together, and Pittsburgh at Denver and Nashville at Seattle give the tied ABC wild-card clubs separate tests. Dallas can gain half a game on idle Chicago by beating Atlanta.

The August 20 briefing asked how deadline arrivals would be used. Miami’s Addie de Ruijter drove in 12 runs during the challenge, including all four in the Charlotte opener. Justin Bowen, acquired from Boston, saved four games for Chicago. Those are two different ways the deadline deals are showing up in the race. Keep their actual use in view

when the active lists get longer.

The league export schedules active rosters to expand from 26 to 40 on September 1. Expansion is still marked inactive at this cutoff. Start with the August 31 active lists and check the September 1 roster and transaction records before reporting a call-up. Confirm the first use in a box score. Watch whether contenders use the extra places for relief innings, bench matchups or coverage for unavailable players, and where clubs farther back give an unfamiliar player a start.