Chicago earned the right to chase Dallas

Chicago Fire beat | 1981-08-31 | Games through 1981-08-30

The August 20 Observer conversation gave Chicago credit for a plus-27 run differential in the Conference Challenges and asked when it would show in the standings. This time seven wins came with a much smaller surplus, 40 runs to 34. Heriberto Jimenez gave the Fire eight scoreless innings and 13 strikeouts in their 1–0 opening victory over Detroit. Chicago won both games on August 21 and took three of four from the Dukes.

The Fire split with Dallas and lost a 14-inning game at Minneapolis on Hirotoshi Nishimoto’s sacrifice fly. They took the other three games from the Blizzard. Those are the wins that mattered while Dallas was sweeping Detroit. Last year Chicago won this division and Detroit went on to win the Grand Series. Chicago now has to find a way past Dallas or Miami.

The Fire start September at Charlotte. Playing the East leader while Miami opens in Phoenix tests both of Chicago’s routes. Dallas remains on the schedule six times, four of them on the final weekend.