Dallas swept the champions and still has Chicago behind it

Dallas Rustlers beat | 1981-08-31 | Games through 1981-08-30

Dallas opened the challenge with 17 runs at Minneapolis and lost the next three there. It split two games in Chicago and was level with the Fire when Detroit arrived. The Rustlers' four-game sweep of the defending champions was emphatic, by a combined 20–4. The reward in the standings was a one-game lead, with Chicago still close enough to make the next Dallas loss count.

Anton Garay allowed four hits over eight scoreless innings against Detroit on August 29. He had already given Dallas eight scoreless innings in Minneapolis with no decision, in a game the Rustlers lost 1–0 in ten. The two starts tell the difference between getting a good outing and turning it into an August result.

Dallas opens at home against Atlanta, an 8–2 club in the challenge. Six games remain against the Fire. Two are in Chicago in September, and the final four of the season are in Dallas.