

2017 GOVERNORS' CUP PLAYOFFS PREVIEW



SEMI-FINALS
SEPT. 6-10

FINALS
SEPT. 12-16



August 11, 2017

For Immediate Release

International League's 134th Season Approaches the Finish Line

With just over three weeks remaining in the 2017 International League regular season, the playoff picture is taking shape as the circuit's top clubs eye a Governors' Cup championship. The circuit's best record thus far belongs once again to the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders, reigning kings of the IL and defending Triple-A Baseball national champions. SWB is in the midst of a southern road trip, which began earlier this week with a three-game sweep of Gwinnett at Coolray Field.



Johnny Field produced the walk-off hit for Durham Thursday

Wednesday's 2-1 victory brought SWB's overall winning streak to six, but on Thursday night the RailRiders began a four-game series against the club with the IL's second-best record this season, the Durham Bulls. The hosts took the opener in extra-inning walk-off fashion, when after ten frames of scoreless baseball the Bulls got an RBI single from Johnny Field in the 11th to come away with a dramatic 1-0 triumph.

SWB's 7.5-game lead in the North Division remained secure thanks to losses by both 2nd place Lehigh Valley and 3rd place Rochester on Thursday as well. For Durham, the victory means the Bulls maintain a 15.5-game lead over Gwinnett in the South. The Braves picked up a 3-1 win against Louisville on Thursday behind Andrew Albers, who became the franchise's first 12-game winner in six years, but Gwinnett still has a long hill to climb in the standings without much time to go.

The tightest divisional race in 2017 has taken place in the West, where Indianapolis currently owns a 3.5-game edge over the defending division champs from Columbus. The Clippers swept a three-game home series with Indianapolis to open the month of August, but since then the Tribe has bounced back by winning five of its last six games. Columbus is just 2-6 since that series, including a 3-2 loss on Thursday in the first game of a series at McCoy Stadium in Pawtucket.

The chase for the Wild Card may prove to be the League's most exciting race in 2017, with several teams clawing for the final entry into the Governors' Cup playoffs. The top three teams in the Wild Card standings all lost Thursday, meaning Lehigh Valley remains on top by a narrow 1.0-game margin over Rochester. Columbus sits 7.0 games behind the IronPigs and now just 2.5 games in front of the red-hot PawSox who have won four straight. The team that captures the Wild Card entry will win a first round date with the North Division champion, meaning a repeat of last season's matchup between Scranton/WB and Lehigh Valley is a possibility. The winner of that first round series will take on the winner of the matchup between the South and West Division champs in the Governors' Cup finals beginning September 12.

Pedrique Aiming to Join Exclusive Company Amongst IL Managers



In 2016, his first season at the helm, Al Pedrique brought the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre franchise its second Governors' Cup title, following in the footsteps of Dave Miley who got it done in 2008. Now he is aiming to become just the tenth skipper in League history to win the Cup in consecutive seasons. Miley took SWB back to the finals in 2009 but couldn't complete the goal of a second straight championship.

Mike Sarbaugh, now the third base coach for the Cleveland Indians, holds the distinction of being the most recent manager to capture back-to-back IL titles, doing so with Columbus in 2010-11. International League Hall of Famers Bill Evers (Durham) and Larry Parrish (Toledo) are the only others to accomplish the feat since the turn of the century.

MANAGERS WINNING CONSECUTIVE GOV. CUPS

Jewel Ens, *Syracuse* (1942-43)
Clay Hopper, *Montreal* (1948-49)
Fred Walker, *Rochester* (1955-56)
Dick Williams, *Toronto* (1965-66)
Frank Verdi, *Syracuse* (1969-70)
Rick Down, *Columbus* (1991-92)
Bill Evers, *Durham* (2002-03)
Larry Parrish, *Toledo* (2005-06)
Mike Sarbaugh, *Columbus* (2010-11)



IL Fans Longing to Witness a Home Field Cup Clinching

Nearly a decade ago, on September 15, 2007, fans in Richmond, Virginia experienced something that hasn't happened again in the International League since. The Richmond Braves captured the Governors' Cup in front of their home fans at The Diamond. To date, they are the last team to win the coveted postseason trophy in the friendly confines of their home park.

The next two seasons saw Scranton/Wilkes-Barre and Durham trade clinchings in each other's stadium. Durham later experienced the same exchange in 2013-14 with Pawtucket. When Columbus won consecutive titles in 2010-11, they entered the postseason once as a Wild Card, then as a division champ, prompting alternating slots in the playoffs that resulted in consecutive road clinchings. The PawSox were in three straight finals from 2012-14, falling short only in 2013 when the series ended at home.

The Braves franchise, which relocated to Georgia in 2009, took a crack last season at reversing the trend only to see the RailRiders celebrate on their turf. The 2017 finals will conclude in the home ballpark of either the North Division champion or the Wild Card club.

GOVERNORS' CUP CLINCHINGS SINCE 2008

Champion

2008 - Scranton/Wilkes-Barre
2009 - Durham
2010 - Columbus
2011 - Columbus
2012 - Pawtucket
2013 - Durham
2014 - Pawtucket
2015 - Columbus
2016 - Scranton/Wilkes-Barre

Clinching Game

Game 4 @ Durham Bulls Athletic Park (Durham, NC)
Game 3 @ PNC Field (Moosic, PA)
Game 4 @ Durham Bulls Athletic Park (Durham, NC)
Game 4 @ Coca-Cola Park (Allentown, PA)
Game 3 @ Knights Stadium (Fort Mill, SC)
Game 4 @ McCoy Stadium (Pawtucket, RI)
Game 5 @ Durham Bulls Athletic Park (Durham, NC)
Game 5 @ Victory Field (Indianapolis, IN)
Game 4 @ Coolray Field (Lawrenceville, GA)



The Richmond Braves and their fans celebrate winning the 2007 Governors' Cup at home.

2017 Governors' Cup Playoffs Schedule & Tiebreaking Information

FIRST ROUND (Best of 5)

Sept. 6-7

West Division Winner at South Division Winner
North Division Winner at Wild Card

Sept. 8-10 (as necessary)

South Division Winner at West Division Winner
Wild Card at North Division Winner

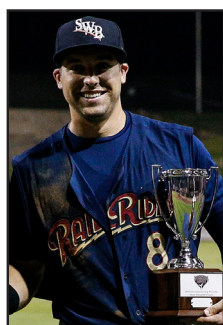
FINALS (Best of 5)

Sept. 12-13

North/Wild Card Winner
at
West/South Winner

Sept. 14-16 (as necessary)

West/South Winner
at
North/Wild Card Winner



SWB's Jake Cave accepts the 2016 Governors' Cup Playoffs MVP Award.

TIE IN FINAL STANDINGS

If two teams finish the regular season in a tie for first place within their division and both teams will advance to the Governors' Cup playoffs, the teams will be considered division co-champions and the following tiebreaker format will be used to determine which team enters the postseason as the division champion and which will enter as the wild card.

If only one team will advance to the Governors' Cup playoffs, the two teams shall play one game the next day after the regular season concludes to determine their final standing. The additional game will be considered an extension of the championship season. The following tiebreaker format will be used to determine where the game will be played.

Any tie in the standings for the wild card position will be broken using this criteria and not play-in games.

Should a tie in the standings exist between more than two teams with two teams to advance, the tie will be resolved by first applying the tiebreaker criteria to determine the division champion.

TIEBREAKER FORAMT

- 1) The team with the most wins in the head-to-head season series;
- 2) The team with the highest winning percentage during intradivisional play;
- 3) The team with the highest winning percentage against the other two division winners;
- 4) The team with the greatest differential of runs scored and runs allowed during the season;
- 5) Should the run differential also be tied, the President of the League will flip a coin to make the determination.



Nothing Settled Just Yet in Division & Wild Card Races

NORTH DIVISION REPORT: Last season's tight race atop the North Division culminated in the Governors' Cup playoffs' first-ever showdown between teams from Pennsylvania. The Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders (*New York Yankees*) outlasted the Lehigh Valley IronPigs (*Philadelphia Phillies*) by 6.0 games for the division, then dispatched them as the Wild Card entrant in a three-game first round sweep on the way to the Governors' Cup. The RailRiders are aiming for a third straight division crown this season but have yet to completely put away Lehigh Valley, who trails by 7.5 games, or the Rochester Red Wings (*Minnesota Twins*), who sit 8.5 games back. The challengers may still get their opportunities. Rochester and Scranton/WB are set to meet eight times between August 21-31, while the RailRiders also must travel to Lehigh Valley where they will end the regular season with a four-game series at Coca-Cola Park.



IL NORTH STANDINGS

	W-L	PCT.	GB	Gm. Rem.
Scranton/WB	75-42	.641	--	24
Lehigh Valley	68-50	.576	7.5	24
Rochester	67-51	.568	8.5	24
Pawtucket	58-59	.496	17.0	25
Buffalo	51-67	.432	24.5	24
Syracuse	45-73	.381	30.5	24

SWB's Jake Cave hit .390 in July and was named IL Player of the Month.

WEST DIVISION REPORT: Each year from 2011-15, the top two teams in the West Division standings were the Indianapolis Indians (*Pittsburgh Pirates*) and Columbus Clippers (*Cleveland Indians*), but last season Indy slipped a game behind Louisville into 3rd place. The two old foes, whose rivalry peaked in 2015 with a meeting in the Governors' Cup finals, are involved in another tight divisional race this season. The defending West champs from Columbus get only one more crack at the Indians head-to-head, which will come August 25-27 during a three-game set at Victory Field. The Clippers lead the season series against Indianapolis 11-8 thanks to a three-game sweep at Huntington Park earlier this month. If the Tribe falls short in the West, the team's intradivisional record may be to blame. While the leaders in the North (SWB +21) and South (DUR +20) are significantly over .500 playing within their respective divisions, the Indians are merely 28-26 versus foes from the West Division.



IL WEST STANDINGS

	W-L	PCT.	GB	Gm. Rem.
Indianapolis	64-53	.547	--	25
Columbus	61-57	.517	3.5	24
Toledo	56-61	.479	8.0	24
Louisville	46-70	.397	17.5	26

Steven Brault of Indianapolis leads the IL this season with a 2.06 ERA.

SOUTH DIVISION REPORT: The Durham Bulls (*Tampa Bay Rays*) won the South Division flag seven times from 2007-14 but have been on the outside of the playoff picture each of the past two seasons. Last year for the first time in League history the South Division finished without a team over .500 in the standings. The only club to break through this season has done so in impressive fashion, as the Bulls currently own a 15.5-game advantage over the 2nd-place Gwinnett Braves (*Atlanta Braves*). Gwinnett captured its first division title on the final day of the 2016 regular season and advanced through to the Governors' Cup finals, but the Braves aren't on track for a repeat this time around currently sitting 11.0 games back in the Wild Card hunt. The ace up manager Damon Berryhill's sleeve could be the fact the Braves and Bulls will meet nine times over the final two weeks of the regular season, but Gwinnett must first find a way to get within striking distance.



IL SOUTH STANDINGS

	W-L	PCT.	GB	Gm. Rem.
Durham	72-45	.615	--	25
Gwinnett	56-60	.483	15.5	26
Norfolk	55-63	.466	17.5	24
Charlotte	47-70	.402	25.0	25

Durham's Ryan Yarbrough, the IL Pitcher of the Week, is 4-1 since the break.



WILD CARD REPORT: Since narrowly capturing the Wild Card in 2013, the Rochester Red Wings have been back in the mix each season since, only to fall short. The Wings averaged a winning percentage of .544 over the past three seasons but missed the Wild Card each time. Mike Quade's ballclub is sixteen games over .500 this year but are currently trailing Lehigh Valley by 1.0 game for the Wild Card berth. The IronPigs earned their franchise's second trip to the postseason in 2016, which was the second by way of the Wild Card. The most recent team from the South Division to win the Wild Card was Gwinnett in 2009.



Rochester's Zack Granite, the IL Player of the Month in June, recently returned from the Twins.

WILD CARD LEADERS

	W-L	PCT.	GB	Gm. Rem.
Lehigh Valley	68-50	.576	--	24
Rochester	67-51	.568	1.0	24
Columbus	61-57	.517	7.0	24
Pawtucket	58-59	.496	9.5	25
Gwinnett	56-60	.483	11.0	26
Toledo	56-61	.479	11.5	24



SERIES TO WATCH THIS WEEK:

Aug. 10-13: Scranton/Wilkes-Barre at Durham

On Thursday, Durham took game one of the potential finals preview occurring this weekend at Durham Bulls Athletic Park. The two franchises, which faced each other for the Governors' Cup in 2008 and 2009, are both ahead in their respective divisions with an eye towards 2017 postseason glory.

Aug. 15-17: Rochester at Columbus

A matchup with major implications in the Wild Card race begins at Huntington Park after a League-wide off day on Monday. The Red Wings and Clippers are 2nd and 3rd in the Wild Card standings, though neither has completely abandoned dreams of winning its division. Both clubs know the Wild Card could be the only ticket remaining into the postseason.

Aug. 15-17: Indianapolis at Buffalo

As Columbus kicks off a week-long homestand, their West Division rivals travel to Buffalo to begin a six-game road trip. The Indians and Bisons met for three games earlier this week at Victory Field, where the Tribe took two out of three from the Herd. The Indians will try to keep things pointed towards a division title when they invade Coca-Cola Field next week.

Triple-A National Championship Game Coming to SWB Sept. 19

PREVIOUS RESULTS - TRIPLE-A NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

- 2006 - Tucson 5, Toledo 2 (Oklahoma City, OK)
- 2007 - Sacramento 7, Richmond 1 (Oklahoma City, OK)
- 2008 - Sacramento 4, Scranton/WB 1 (Oklahoma City, OK)
- 2009 - Durham 5, Memphis 4 (11) (Oklahoma City, OK)
- 2010 - Columbus 12, Tacoma 6 (Oklahoma City, OK)
- 2011 - Columbus 8, Omaha 3 (Albuquerque, NM)
- 2012 - Reno 10, Pawtucket 3 (Durham, NC)
- 2013 - Omaha 2, Durham 1 (Allentown, PA)
- 2014 - Omaha 4, Pawtucket 2 (Charlotte, NC)
- 2015 - Fresno 7, Columbus 0 (El Paso, TX)
- 2016 - Scranton/WB 3, El Paso 1 (Memphis, TN)

Wins by League - PCL 7, IL 4

One year after winning the Gildan Triple-A National Championship Game, the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders will play the role of host in 2017. In the event's eleven-year history, no host team has participated in the Triple-A National Championship Game.

Date: Tuesday, September 19

Time: 7:00 P.M. EST

Location: PNC Field - Moosic, Pennsylvania

Matchup: PCL Champion at IL Champion (*home team determined by host league*)

Broadcast: NBCSN (TV); Gildan Triple-A National Championship Game Radio Network

