

The Athletics Base Ball Club, 1865-1871, and the Establishment of the Professional Game in Philadelphia

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By the late 1850's, baseball (ie., New York game) had overtaken cricket and town ball as the dominant sport in Philadelphia. Intramural matches among local clubs and intercity contests against clubs from New York, Brooklyn, Newark and other cities increased the game's popularity in the Quaker City during the Civil War. The Athletics emerged as Philadelphia's best base ball club following the truce at Appomattox and challenged Brooklyn teams for baseball supremacy. It was not long before *The Clipper*, a New York City based newspaper, called for contests to determine an American baseball Champion in which the Athletics eagerly entered. But in order to compete with the Brooklyn teams, the Athletics had to attract players with more talent than the ones at their roster. They resorted to financial inducements to recruit highly skilled players which enabled them to compete on par with the Brooklyn clubs in the immediate post-war years. This paper analyzes the movement toward the professionalization of baseball in Philadelphia and its consequences during the 1865 to 1871 period.