

A Schott From The Bleachers

1918 Pelicans Had Best New Orleans Record

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As the 2001 Zephyrs continue to dominate the PCL Eastern Division, we have a question: *Which New Orleans team had the best winning record in the old Southern Association of which our city was a member from 1901 through 1959?*

The record was set by the 1918 Pelicans team managed by Johnny Dobbs, in a season shortened to 70 games by World War I. Final 1918 standings showed New Orleans in first place with a record of 49 – 21, an even .700 winning percentage in the abbreviated season.

On the basis of a complete season, the 1926 Pelicans team with Larry Gilbert as skipper, posted a .656 winning percentage with a record of 101 – 53.

The 1918 club finished 7-1/2 games ahead of second-place Little Rock and 34 games over last-place Atlanta. The Southern Association was a Class A league in 1918.

Pete Compton was the leading New Orleans hitter with a .320 batting average; he was the only .300 hitter on the club. Compton spent 20 years in Organized Ball (only 287 games in the majors) and had a lifetime batting average of .302, with 2,751 hits in 9,124 times at-bat. His career lasted from 1909 through 1928.

The 1918 club hit a total of seven home runs: Compton (2), Stansbury, Hemmingway, Barbare, and Phillips. The entire eight-tem league produced only 68 homers in 280 games, about one every four games.

The Pelicans of 1918 won 15 shutout games and lost six.

Larry Gilbert, in his second year as a New Orleans Pelican, batted .282 and led the club with six triples. Larry was to become manager of the Pels in 1923, and the club won another pennant that season.

In the pitching department, five players – Hub Perdue, Bill Bailey, Richard Robertson, Pop-Boy Smith, and Tom Phillips – combined for a record of 44 – 19, a .698 mark.

On June 24, 1918, the Pelicans shut out the Atlanta Crackers by a score of 11 – 0 at Heinemann Park in New Orleans, behind a mysterious pitcher listed in the accounts of the game as “Sailor” Poole of the Naval Reserve, and also called “the Pride of the Naval Reserve.” It is believed that this was Poole’s only appearance ever in professional baseball. He must have been stationed in New Orleans and was allowed a free day to pitch for the locals. Four days later the season ended by order of the War Department. By the next season of 1919 the war was over.

On June 27, 1918, Johnny Dobbs’ Pelicans swept a doubleheader from Birmingham. The box score of the second game of that twin bill, a seven-inning affair that lasted only one hour and twelve minutes. It was a pitcher’s battle between Birmingham’s Slapnicka and New Orleans’ Pop-Boy Smith, who picked up the final victory for the Southern Association champions of the war-shortened 1918 season.

BIRMINGHAM	AB	H	PO	A	NEW ORLEANS	AB	H	PO	A
Black, rf	3	0	0	0	Gilbert, cf	3	0	1	0
a – Haworth, ph	1	0	0	0	Barbare, ss	3	0	2	6
McDonald, 3b	2	1	2	2	Compton, lf	2	0	1	0
Southworth, lf	2	1	2	2	Edmonson, rf	3	0	2	0
Duncan, cf	3	0	1	0	Schepner, 3b	2	1	0	0
R. Smith, rf	3	1	2	0	Bluhm, 1b	2	1	7	0
Bernses, 2b	3	0	1	0	Hemmingway, 2b	2	1	4	2
Jansen, ss	2	0	2	4	Kitchens, c	2	1	3	0
Walker, 1b	3	1	9	0	C. Smith, p	2	0	1	1
SLapnicka, p	3	0	0	4					
Totals	25	4	18	10	Totals	21	4	21	9

Summary: **E** – Schepner, Hemmingway. **R** – Schepner. **RBI** – Bluhm. **2B** – McDonald, Schepner. **SB** – R. Smith. **DP** – Slapnicka to Jansen to Walker; Barbare to Hemmingway to Bluhm.

Umpire – Brennan.

Time – One hour and 12 minutes.

Score by inning:

								R	H	E	
Birmingham	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	4	0
New Orleans	0	0	0	1	0	0	x	-	1	4	2

	IP	H	R	SO	BB		IP	H	R	SO	BB
Slapnicka (L)	6	4	1	1	1	C. Smith (W)	7	4	0	3	2

**Best Records of New Orleans Teams
1901 - 2001**

Year	Manager	Won	Lost	Pct
1918	Johnny Dobbs	49	21	.700
1926	Larry Gilbert	101	53	.656
1905	Charley Frank	84	45	.651
1921	Johnny Dobbs	97	57	.630
1927	Larry Gilbert	96	57	.627
1947	Fred Walters	93	59	.612
1923	Larry Gilbert	89	57	.610
1934	Larry Gilbert	94	60	.610
1924	Larry Gilbert	93	60	.608
1902	Abner Powell	72	47	.605
1954	Danny Murtaugh	92	62	.597

Note: 1918 season was shortened by World War I.
1934 combines a split-season record.

Keep in mind that a good regular season record does not guarantee a championship. For example, Abner Powell's 1902 team finished third while playing over .600 ball. On the other hand the Zephyrs 1998 club that won the Triple-A World Series championship had a regular season record of 76 – 66, a .535 winning percentage.

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