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THE POLO GROUNDS CHRONICLE

GIANTS RUN WILD THROUGH JUNE

A 23–5 month sends New York to 54–16; Antonelli reaches 17–0

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GIANTS RUN WILD THROUGH JUNE

If May established the New York Giants as the team to beat in the National League, June turned them into a runaway train. The Giants tore through June with a 23–5 record, raising their season mark to an astonishing 54–16 (.771). New York now owns a 12½-game lead over Philadelphia, with Milwaukee 15½ games back and preseason powerhouse Brooklyn a distant fourth at 37–33, 17 games behind the Giants. The numbers barely seem believable. Through 70 games, New York is playing at a pace that would produce approximately 119 victories over a 154-game season. And there wasn't much mystery about how the Giants did it in June. They simply overwhelmed people. New York outscored its opponents 150–78 during the month, averaging better than five runs per game while allowing fewer than three. The Giants were particularly devastating away from the Polo Grounds, going 12–1 on the road during June. Their overall road record now stands at an incredible 28–6. There was also a stretch during the month when the Giants simply stopped losing. Twelve consecutive victories. By the time opponents finally interrupted the streak, the National League race had begun to look very different.

THE GIANTS’ JUNE

New York entered June at 31–11. Twenty-eight games later: 54–16. That means the Giants have now played three months of baseball with only sixteen losses. The most impressive part may be the consistency. April established that this club was good. May showed that the start wasn't a fluke. June was something else entirely. Monthly Record April: 11–3 May: 20–8 June: 23–5 Season: 54–16 And June ended with an exclamation point. On June 30, the Giants demolished the Brooklyn Dodgers 11–0. There aren't many better ways to finish a month than shutting out one of your biggest rivals while scoring eleven runs.

THE SAY HEY KID

Willie Mays is having a season for the ages At this point, calling Willie Mays the Giants' best hitter doesn't really capture what is happening. Through 70 games: .423 AVG .474 OBP .804 SLG 24 HR 71 RBI 77 runs 119 hits 21 doubles 7 triples Mays has struck out only 29 times while drawing 28 walks. His 1.278 OPS leads the National League. So does his batting average. So does his on-base percentage. So does his slugging percentage. The only major Triple Crown category he does not lead is home runs, where Cincinnati's Ted Kluszewski has 26 to Mays' 24. Mays does lead the league with 71 RBI, ahead of Gil Hodges and Kluszewski. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Mays' season is that his ridiculous April wasn't simply an early-season hot streak. At the end of April he was hitting .421. At the end of May he was hitting .429. At the end of June? .423. Seventy games into the season, Willie Mays is still hitting comfortably above .400.

MAYS IS NOT DOING IT ALONE

The Giants' offense has become much more than one superstar. Don Mueller continues to be an ideal complement to Mays. He's hitting .329, with 97 hits in 295 at-bats. Alvin Dark is batting .306 with 12 home runs and 56 runs scored. Hank Thompson has quietly developed into one of the most valuable hitters in the lineup. He's batting .299, but the more impressive number may be his .412 on-base percentage, fueled by 40 walks. He's also scored 49 runs. Whitey Lockman has contributed eight homers and 45 RBI. Monte Irvin's .215 batting average hasn't been impressive, but he has still driven in 47 runs and drawn 44 walks, helping produce a .338 OBP. This isn't simply the Willie Mays Show anymore. It is an extremely deep offensive club built around the best hitter in the league.

JOHNNY ANTONELLI: 17–0

There are hot starts. There are great starts. And then there is whatever Johnny Antonelli is doing. After finishing May at 11–0, Antonelli won six more games during June. His season record: 17–0 But the undefeated record isn't even the craziest part. His ERA is: 0.71 Antonelli has pitched 152 innings and surrendered only 71 hits and 12 earned runs. His WHIP is 0.68. Opponents are averaging only about 4.2 hits per nine innings against him. He has nine complete games and has struck out 97 while walking only 33. At the end of May, Antonelli was already leading the National League with an 0.75 ERA and an 11–0 record. One month later, the ERA has actually gone down. At this stage, Antonelli's season has moved beyond merely being the best pitching performance in the league. It has become one of the central stories of the entire replay. Every Antonelli start now carries two questions: Can anyone beat him? And... Can anyone score on him? So far, the answers are apparently no and not very often.

THE REST OF THE ROTATION

Antonelli understandably gets the attention, but the Giants have received plenty of pitching behind him. Ruben Gomez: 10–3, 2.87 ERA Sal Maglie: 4–5, 3.44 ERA Jim Hearn: 4–5, 5.27 ERA The bullpen has also been outstanding. Marv Grissom is 4–0 with a 0.99 ERA and 12 saves in 23 appearances. Windy McCall owns a 2.11 ERA. Hoyt Wilhelm is 5–3 with seven saves. Antonelli may be pitching at a historic level, but the Giants aren't 54–16 because of one pitcher. This has become an extraordinarily complete ballclub.

THE NATIONAL LEAGUE RACE

Brooklyn's position may be the biggest surprise. The Dodgers have enough talent to be dangerous, but their June struggles have left them hovering barely above .500. Meanwhile Philadelphia has emerged as New York's closest pursuer. "Closest," however, is relative. Twelve and a half games is an enormous deficit before July has even begun.

AROUND THE NATIONAL LEAGUE

Mays isn't the only player putting together a huge season. Cincinnati's Ted Kluszewski leads the league with 26 home runs, two ahead of Mays. Brooklyn's Gil Hodges has 19. Milwaukee's Eddie Mathews has 18. The RBI race, however, belongs to Mays. His 71 leads Hodges and Kluszewski. And Mays' dominance is especially obvious in the rate statistics. He leads the league at: .423 AVG .474 OBP .804 SLG 1.278 OPS It's difficult to construct a better first half than that.

AROUND THE AMERICAN LEAGUE

While New York is running away with the National League, Cleveland has established itself as the powerhouse of the American League. The Indians are 51–19 (.729) and lead Chicago by five games. The Yankees sit third at 42–31, already 10½ games behind Cleveland. The American League has also produced a pitching performance that nearly rivals Antonelli's. Cleveland's Early Wynn is 15–0 with a 1.56 ERA. Chicago's Jack Harshman has an even lower 0.81 ERA and is 7–0. Whitey Ford is 7–3 with a 1.88 ERA. Offensively, Minnie Minoso has been spectacular for Chicago. Minoso is hitting .337 while leading the league in: Runs — 57 RBI — 59 Doubles — 21 Triples — 13 Total bases — 170 OPS — 1.041 Meanwhile Mickey Mantle is batting .317 with a .421 OBP and .551 slugging percentage. He has nine home runs, 56 RBI and 48 runs scored. If the season eventually produces a New York–Cleveland World Series, there are already some fascinating potential matchups developing. But there is an awful lot of baseball remaining.

APBA RETURNS

June also represented an important change in how this replay is being played. After using Replay Baseball during May, the season returned to APBA for all June games. The results provide an interesting early comparison: May — Replay Baseball: 20–8 June — APBA: 23–5 Obviously one month isn't enough to draw conclusions about either engine. But it gives us another subplot worth following. We'll continue tracking not only individual statistics and standings, but whether anything noticeable develops in scoring, pitching, close games or overall results as the replay moves between game systems. For June, at least, APBA certainly didn't cool down the Giants.

THREE MONTHS DOWN

Seventy games. Fifty-four victories. Sixteen losses. A 12½-game lead. Willie Mays hitting .423. Johnny Antonelli at 17–0 with a 0.71 ERA. The New York Giants haven't merely exceeded expectations through the first three months of this replay. They've demolished them. But baseball seasons have a way of changing. Antonelli will eventually lose a game. Won't he? Mays will eventually fall below .400. Won't he? And somebody in the National League will eventually make a run at the Giants. Won't they? Those are questions for July. For now, the view from the Polo Grounds is pretty spectacular.

NEXT MONTH IN THE CHRONICLE

Can Willie Mays still be hitting .400 at the end of July? How long can Johnny Antonelli remain undefeated? Can Philadelphia, Milwaukee or Brooklyn make this a pennant race again? Can Cleveland continue to control the American League? And perhaps most intriguing of all: How far can these Giants take this? Next stop: July 1954.