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## TIGHT PENNANT RACES IN PIONEER LEAGUE FINAL SERIES

*Boise Game Settled by Knock Out, Missoula Walks-Off, Almond Breaks Home Run Record*

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All you can really ask out of baseball is a tight pennant race.

With only 8 days left in the Pioneer League's 2021 season there's not only just one squeaker pennant race, but two - with nail-biters in both the North and South divisions that will define the playoffs scheduled to begin on September 11th.

"You couldn't ask for a better finish to the season than this," said Pioneer League President Mike Shapiro. "7 of our 8 teams have a very legitimate shot at making the playoffs. If you love baseball, 2021 will go down as one of the best in Pioneer League history."

In the Northern Division, first half winner Missoula is in a dogfight to capture the second half as well with Billings (1 GB), Idaho Falls (3 GB) and Great Falls (4 GB) following closely on their heels.

With each club in the division in such close proximity to the lead, the final two series will provide all the drama any fan could hope for.

Missoula and Great Falls will face off in Missoula for 6 of their final 9 games while Billings hosts Idaho Falls for 6 as well. They flip it around for the last 3 with Billings going to Missoula and Great Falls traveling to Idaho Falls.

Last night, in their first matchup, Missoula and Great Falls kept the score low with the game tied 1-1 going into the 9th. Great Falls scored one in the top of 9th and Missoula answered with two in the bottom of the 9th providing their first walk-off in the 2021 season. Their thrilling walk-off pushed Great Falls down to four games behind.

In the South, Ogden's chances to win both halves may prove difficult as they enter the final stretch run 5 games behind Boise. Fortunately, the schedule helps Ogden thanks to a 6-game trip to last place Rocky Mountain (11-28 in the second half and only 21-65 overall) and a final 3 game head-to-head matchup at home against Boise that may very well determine the Southern Division pennant race.



Seemingly with a tougher schedule, second place Grand Junction plays in Boise for their penultimate 6 game set and then finishes at home with a single game on the 7th and a doubleheader on the 8th with Rocky Mountain.

Last night, in their first matchup, Grand Junction and Boise kept the score even at 4-4 into the 9th inning, forcing a Knock Out Round. Boise's Wladimir Galindo dramatically won it for a walk-off in the first round, pushing Grand Junction to 2 games behind.

Speaking of homeruns, Missoula's Zac Almond broke the Pioneer League's single-season homerun record with his 25th dinger for the season.

With so much unknown and so much riding on these final series, what is known, however, is that the 2021 season, the Pioneer League's first as an independent league, has been a resounding success both on the field and off the field. League attendance is nearing record-breaking levels, the league's innovative "Knock Out" rule has captured baseball's imagination and the league recently announced it will expand to 10 clubs in 2022.

Good things are in store for the Pioneer League's future, but first there's still a lot of drama to be played out in this exciting 2021 season.

**About the Pioneer Baseball League:** Since 1939, the Pioneer League has operated in the Mountain West region. Beginning in 2021, the PBL became a Major League Baseball Professional Partner League with teams in Montana (Billings, Missoula and Great Falls), Idaho (Boise and Idaho Falls), Utah (Ogden) and Colorado (Grand Junction and Colorado Springs). The Northern Colorado Owlz, formerly the Orem Owlz, and an expansion team in Flathead County, MT will join the League for the 2022 season. For more information go to [www.pioneerleague.com](http://www.pioneerleague.com).



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