

## **Press Clippings 10/10/2018**

### **SPORTS SECTION**

**---Daily Herald---10/10/2018**

## **Glenbard East gets comfortable, beats Larkin on senior night**

**By Stan Goff**

Veteran varsity players Allison Hamaker and Sarah Elliott have been to their share of Glenbard East senior night matches, but Tuesday night's felt a little different.

This time around the talented outside hitters were actually part of the girls volleyball festivities before taking on visiting Larkin. But once the action began, the pair and their fellow seniors continued to do what they've been doing plenty of this year, sweeping the Royals 25-4, 25-8 to stay perfect at 7-0 in the Upstate Eight Conference while improving to 22-5 overall.

"It was a lot of fun, but it was weird," said Hamaker, who had a match-high 11 kills to go with 3 blocks and 2 aces against Larkin. "I walked in with Sarah and I was like, it's our faces on the wall."

The four-year varsity starter, who will play at Ball State next year, started quickly with 5 kills and a block as the Rams charged out to a 12-2 lead. Elliott, meanwhile, led a charge in the second set after the Royals (1-29, 0-6) had closed to within 11-8 in the nightcap. Elliott, who will play collegiately at Gustavus Adolphus College, had 6 kills and 7 digs in the match.

"It's kind of surreal. I sometimes don't feel like a senior this year, and I walked in and was like, Oh my gosh, that's actually us (on the wall with photos and banners)," said the 6-footer who has started for three years. "It's amazing. We've had a really great season so far and I love that we got all the seniors out, even Cailey (Dufort), who has been injured, was able to get out there and serve."

Rams coach Marci Maier knows this is a special team she has in 2018 and she's thankful to have had a strong group of veterans that also includes senior setter Emily Sarles, who had 10 assists and also served out the match with 13 consecutive points as the Rams took the second set going away.

"This is one of the better teams that we've had since I've been here. This is a special group. They're a great group of girls. Just very fun to be around and hard workers ... it's been a good season and we're going to hope that we can elongate it as much as humanly possible," Maier said.

For the Royals it was a tough night. Their passing was off on the same night the Rams were at the top of their game. The young squad has just three seniors and has been battling injuries, but strong serving by captain Kitzia Tinajero did lead an 8-3 run in the second set to get the visitors to within 11-8. Mallory Boulton and Ashley Miller each had winners for Larkin during the stretch.

"We're usually a pretty strong passing and defensive team, and I felt like we didn't really do that at the beginning of the match," Royals coach Henry Graack said. "Obviously, they have some pretty good hitters too, and obviously that takes care of some of that issue. I didn't think they served that tough to get us that out of our system. There were just too many easy balls going over because we were scrambling on our side."

## **---The Courier-News---10/10/2018**

### **Nick's time: In the mud, Nick Deckard powers Bartlett to playoff eligibility with win over Larkin**

**By Paul Johnson**



Bartlett's Nick Deckard (24) is grabbed from behind by Larkin's Jahari Stubbs (5) and Travis Farley during a game on Friday, Oct. 5, 2018. (H. Rick Bamman / The Courier-News)

When Nick Deckard surveyed the scene Friday at Bartlett's first homecoming game on campus, he was happier than he could have imagined.

The senior running back takes prides in his ability to run with power, and the rain and mud didn't bother him at all.

"I was enjoying it," Deckard said. "It gives me an opportunity to help the team."

Bartlett gave Deckard the ball early and often in a 29-6 Upstate Eight win over Larkin, which made the Hawks playoff eligible. Deckard carried 32 times for 127 yards, pushing him over 1,000 yards for the season. He also scored his 10th touchdown.

"That's what it's been all season long with him," first-year Bartlett coach Matt Erlenbaugh said of Deckard. "He's a tough runner, that's for sure. The field conditions, the way the weather was, it was definitely in our favor to have a kid like him with the style of offense that we have, just going downhill."

"It's tough making cuts in the mud. You got a guy who can lower his shoulder and get you those yards, you're in business."



Bartlett coach Matt Erlenbaugh heads back to the sideline after a timeout under a heavy mist during a game on Friday, Oct. 5, 2018. (H. Rick Bamman / The Courier-News)

Deckard was covered in mud while walking off the field Friday with 1:23 left in the third quarter when the game was suspended with Bartlett leading 22-6.

He had a cleaner jersey when the game finished Saturday at Streamwood's Millennium Field. But he still provided the tough running Bartlett (5-2, 5-2) needed to reach playoff eligibility for only the second time since 2012.

"I'm not the fastest guy," Deckard said. "I'm more of a power runner. When we run the ball, it suits me perfectly."

Deckard was one of the seniors who kept teammates on task last spring as the Hawks waited for an announcement about their new coach.

“We didn’t know who the coach was going to be for a long time,” Deckard said. “We seniors just kept us together. Once we got the coach, things were rolling. We knew we had something great.”

Erlenbaugh quickly caught up to speed with what he had in the program after getting the job in June. The success the Hawks have had this season has not been a surprise to him.

“From what I saw and what I evaluated in talent over the summer, this is kind of where I thought we’d be,” Erlenbaugh said. “Things have been going well. The new staff, new system, it took a little bit to get it rolling how we wanted, and we’re still far from that.

“But each week we’re getting better and better and working together as a team in all phases of the game. I’m very impressed and liking where we’re at right now.”

The playoffs were an expectation at Bartlett for a long time. The Hawks reached the postseason every year except for 2009 from 2000 to 2012.

This group hasn’t seen that kind of success, so last weekend’s win was sweet heading into Saturday’s showdown at South Elgin (6-1).

“We were ecstatic after the game, being eligible for the playoffs,” Deckard said. “I’ve never been in the playoffs before. It’s the greatest feeling. We knew we had a chance to change our perception.

“I’m not surprised. We have talent. We have kids with heart. We’re definitely rolling.”