

Press Clippings - 11/03/2023

- Daily Herald -

Five high school football playoff games to watch this weekend

By: John Lemon

11/2/ 2023



Warren's Jack Wolf passes against Lake Zurich in a football game in Lake Zurich on Friday, September 22, 2023. (John Starks | Staff Photographer)

The second round of playoffs bring several intriguing matchups between area schools from nearby suburbs.

No. 10 Warren (8-2) at No. 7 **South Elgin** (9-1)

In Class 8A the Blue Devils take their eight-game winning streak to South Elgin in a matchup of two teams that excel at running the ball and playing defense.

The Storm plays in the Upstate Eight, never known as a strong football conference, while the Blue Devils faced the much tougher schedule against Lake Zurich and Stevenson along with Barrington and Maine South in the nonconference.

But the top three teams in the Upstate Eight this year -- **South Elgin**, Glenbard East and Glenbard South -- all easily won their playoff openers last week. **South Elgin's** win gave coach Dragan Teonic his 100th victory.

Getting No. 101 vs. Warren will be a major challenge, with backs Donovan McNeal and Aaron Stewart entering with a combined 39 touchdowns.

No. 14 Naperville Central (8-2) at No. 3 Barrington (10-0)

Another Class 8A matchup, this one between two proud conferences, the DuPage Valley Conference vs. the Mid-Suburban League. Last week in a similar situation, Neuqua Valley made the DVC proud by knocking off Palatine.

(The Wildcats' reward? A trip to defending 8A champ Loyola this week.)

From missing the playoffs to a perfect season so far, it's been quite a turnaround for Barrington. After limiting record-setting Glenbrook South's Nick Canning to 30 yards rushing last week, Barrington's defense led by Devan Van Ness, Soren Leahy, Josh Piepert, Jack Burzinski and Ian Maderosian will take aim at the Redhawks' Aidan Clark, who ran for 248 yards and 4 TDs last week.

No. 13 Downers Grove North (8-2) at No. 4 Hersey (10-0)

In this one, the MSL squares off with another elite conference, the West Suburban Silver, in Class 7A playoff action.

Downers Grove North's only losses are to York and Lyons -- and the Trojans were missing running back/linebacker Noah Battle. Quarterback Owen Lansu has had a big season. Hersey had a similar matchup last week against Wheaton Warrenville South and advanced with a hard-fought 28-19 win. The Huskies also remember being undefeated in this same stage of the playoffs and losing in overtime at Batavia last year. Wide receiver/defensive back Carson Grove has 58 receptions for 1,276 yards and 15 touchdowns, and 5 interceptions on defense. The Northwestern commit is one of several high-level players who will try to make sure that early loss doesn't happen again.

No. 1 Lake Zurich (9-1) at No. 9 Kaneland (7-3)

"Back in Black" will be blaring in Maple Park Saturday when the Knights take the field. They will need a huge game from quarterback Troyer Carlson, a four-year starter, to keep up with the Bears, who have regularly made long postseason runs in Class 7A and now have moved down to 6A.

Despite injuries, Carlson has completed 104 passes for 1,830 yards and 20 touchdowns while rushing for 362 yards and 6 scores. Aric Johnson has 882 receiving yards and 10 touchdowns.

For the Bears, Chris Pirrone is closing in on a 1,000-yard season. He's at 908 rushing yards and 13 touchdowns.

No. 6 Carmel (9-1) at No. 3 Antioch (10-0)

Also in Class 6A, we've got a matchup of a pair of Lake County schools having excellent seasons against entirely different schedules.

Carmel, whose only loss is to defending Class 7A champion Mt. Carmel, has undoubtedly played the tougher schedule. But Antioch has absolutely steamrolled its NLCC schedule and features new school rushing leader Nick Day, who set the mark (3,044 all-time rushing yards) in the opening round last week, as well as the all-time touchdown record (48).

These teams played in Week 1 last year with Carmel winning 23-21 -- expect another thriller Saturday.

For more on these matchups and the rest of the area teams in the second round of the playoffs, go to football.dailyherald.com.