

Press Clippings 10/14/2021

---Daily Herald---10/14/2021

Boys soccer notes: FVC title on the line Tuesday; Geneva's coming on strong

By Chris Walker, Daily Herald Correspondent

The stage is set at Crystal Lake South on Tuesday afternoon as Huntley visits with the Fox Valley Conference title on the line.

Both teams are undefeated in conference play this season although the Red Raiders (14-2-2, 7-0-1) tied Dundee-Crown. Still, a victory by the Red Raiders would give them the conference title outright.

Huntley's Hayes Porsche (17 goals, 5 assists) is having a monster season, causing havoc for opposing teams, especially with a strong supporting cast of dangerous players around him in Thomas Rodriguez (10 assists), Zach Heitkemper (7 goals, 7 assists) and sophomore Hudson Nielson (4 goals 8 assists).

"Whenever Hayes is around, there's plenty of opportunity, whether he is scoring or assisting, something is happening," Huntley coach Matt Lewandowski said. "He's fun to watch. You can see how he is thinking ahead, but what he's thinking isn't what you're thinking. He see the game different from most of us."

Crystal Lake South (15-2-2, 8-0) is getting contributions from a lot of its threats with Tom Coughlin (team-best 13 goals plus 10 assists), Michal Dejworek (team-high 11 assists), Sam Bahnfleth, Nolan Gatzinger, and Tomasz Slawek each with 6 goals or more.

"Crystal Lake South is always a tough game," Lewandowski said. "It's great to have a strong opponent leading into the playoffs to set the stage but it's even better to face a tough

opponent with high stakes going into the playoffs. Either team wins conference outright with a win."

Changing for the better:

Geneva (6-7-5) is a much better team than it was in August and September and suddenly the Vikings are a matchup nightmare heading into the postseason.

Unbeaten in its last six games, the Vikings wrap up the season on Tuesday against Lake Park before taking on Wheaton North in a Class 3A Geneva regional semifinal on Oct. 19.

"I think the tough start taught us some lessons and got us used to those high-level games," Geneva coach Jason Bhatta said. "We had some three-year guys come back and big expectations but we were disappointed with how we started. But it's a credit to them. They never became discouraged, there was no infighting and we started playing like we could play."

Bhatta changed formations in back, opting to go with three in front of goalkeeper Hayden Vostal. Braeden McPheron, Grant Havertine, Luke Easter and Colin Hasty are the key defenders who have played crucial roles in back during Geneva's recent run of success.

"Once we switched up the formation we stopped giving up goals," Bhatta said. "We learned from our mistakes and (from) playing in the Best of the West, and Naperville North and playing York and St. Charles East. We've gone on a nice little run, tied a good Huntley team and I'd rather be peaking now than earlier."

The Green Wave soccer family:

Chase and Ty Brieger grew up around St. Edward soccer since their father, Tim, has seemingly been at the helm forever on both the boys and girls side, having eclipsed 1,000 games coached at the Elgin school a few years ago. Now, with Chase playing at DePauw and

Ty finishing up his senior year at St. Edward, that era is coming to a close with that final opportunity to coach his youngest son approaching.

"The kids were born in 2002 and 2004 and kind of grew up around soccer here so it'll be tough," Tim Brieger said. "You wait all these years for the boys to play at St. Ed and you wait 13 years for it to happen but you don't realize it's over in 6 years in a blink of an eye."

Brieger said his boys would watch former St. Edward stars shine and dream of someday filling their shoes while some of the girls from state-bound teams used to babysit the boys.

"It's kind of surreal to think about," Brieger said. "We had senior night and Ty and another senior, Robert Wilson, who grew up together in club and played basketball hugged each other and I got a great picture of it. It's hard to believe Ty is going to be done and with a single-game elimination you don't know when it's going to an end. It's good they both left their mark at St. Ed's and that 2018 boys team taking second in the state will always be there with them."

While coaching his own boys is one of Brieger's many wonderful career highlights at St. Edward, he's also been blessed to get to know and make an impact in countless lives.

"It's tough every year being a small school, but it's unique because kids are on varsity as freshmen so I get to know them," Brieger said. "I keep track of all of my kids. I call them all my kids and they come back and help out and now my kids (who played for me) are having kids so I call them my grandkids."

Ty Brieger has 12 goals and 10 assists for the Green Wave (7-13-2).

This and that and more:

Kaneland (8-9-1) has had only 6 games this fall decided by a single goal or less, but just one tie. The Knights are either pounding opponents, outscoring them 65-5 in their victories, or hanging tough in losses other than a few lopsided ones to bigger schools. Kaneland has been outscored 32-8 in its losses.

South Elgin and Elgin will face each other in a Class 3A Elgin regional semifinal on Oct. 19. The teams tied 0-0 on Oct. 6. While the No. 4 seeded Maroons are the higher seed, they haven't fared well against the Storm since blanking them 8-0 in the regular season in 2018 and then thumping them 4-0 for a regional title later that year. The teams tied 1-1 in 2019 and earlier this spring South Elgin won 3-2.

Dundee-Crown (11-3-2) lost a tight one to Crystal Lake South and tied Huntley this fall and likely will be in a position to win a regional title against Jacobs or Larkin in the Class 3A Harlem regional. Coincidentally the Chargers will finish the regular season on Tuesday at home against Jacobs.