

Press Clippings for 8/23/2022

2022 season preview: Scouting the Upstate Eight Conference

Daily Herald Report

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Glenbard South's Cam Williams committed to Notre Dame after scoring 11 touchdowns and catching 37 passes last year. *Mark Black/Shaw Local*

Bartlett

2021 fall record: 5-5 overall, 5-4 in UEC.

Coach: Milan Vuckovich, 1st year.

Worth noting: Milan Vuckovich, who grew up in Buffalo Grove and played football for coach Bill Mitz at Stevenson High School (Class of 1999) before playing collegiately for coach Don Patterson at Western Illinois (Class of 2003), takes over for Matt Erlenbaugh this season at **Bartlett**. "I have this amazing opportunity to be the fifth head football coach in the school's history and I couldn't be more excited to see what our staff and program can do this year, and in the future," said Vuckovich. Hired at **Bartlett** during the summer of 2021, Vuckovich served as an assistant under Erlenbaugh last season when the Hawks reached the state playoffs for the third consecutive season (not counting abbreviated spring 2021 campaign). All-UEC running back/linebacker Koleman Salyers (5-9, 160) heads a list of returnees that includes senior WR/RB Jalen Davis (5-9, 170), senior OL/LB Zach Meyer (5-10, 210), senior RB/DB Dontain Williams (5-8, 165), senior RB/LB Malcolm Babers (5-9, 185), junior QB/DB Josh Eckelberry (5-9, 160), junior OL/LB Blake McCluskey (5-11, 220), and sophomore OL/DL Sam Mancilla (6-2, 260). The leading newcomers are seniors Matthew Rabanal (TE/LB), Ravi Banipal (TE/DE), Morrison McCloud (TE/DE), and juniors Damian Alba (OL/DL), Jacob Caradine (WR/DB), Emilio Duenez (RB/DE), Justin Ibegbulem (TE/DE), Aidan Smolenski (K/P), and Matthew Teruel (QB/LB). "We're looking to continue to gel as offensive, defensive and special teams units," said Vuckovich. "The buy-in from the players has been awesome and our staff can't wait to see what they can do this season."

Elgin

2021 fall record: 3-6 overall, 3-6 in UEC.

Coach: Anthony Lynch, 7th year.

Worth noting: The Maroons must find a way to replace All-Area and All-UEC quarterback Clem McCullough, who is now playing at Iowa Western Community College. Senior James Syrek (6-1, 195), a captain and off-season "champion," looks to fill the role at quarterback, surrounded by veterans Matt Lawson (5-10, 185), Adam Lambaz (5-10, 285), Nick West (6-3, 185), Dawayne Evans (6-1, 180), Kristian Davis (6-0, 190), and Aramys Lopez (5-10, 240). Lawson, a junior, earned all-conference status a year ago as the second-leading rusher and TDs in the UEC. Lambaz, an all-UEC selection in two sports, was a state qualifier in wrestling last

year, while West earned honorable mention all-UEC honors as a long snapper and defensive end. Davis and Evans figure to see time at wide receiver and defensive back, while Lopez helps anchor the interior line on both sides of the ball. The list of newcomers includes WR/DB Nate Aquino (5-9, 170), LB Alexis Cordero (6-0, 200), and RB/DB Zane Warkel (5-9, 170). "We're looking to be a competitive team and reach our team goals for the year," said Mason, who guided the **Maroons** to a state playoff berth in 2019. "With no standout player who will dominate the ball offensively, we'll be more balanced across the board. Defensively, we're focused on fundamentals and being elite in everything. We are trying to get to the next level."

Fenton

2021 fall record: 0-9 overall, 0-8 in UEC.

Coach: Matthew Lynch, 5th year.

Worth noting: Fenton must find a way to put points on the scoreboard after scoring just 21 points in 8 games last season (other game was a COVID forfeit) and being blanked in its first 4 contests in 2021. Lynch will turn to a stable of returning players for improvement, including junior OL/LB Richard Swanek III (6-2, 205), junior OL/DE Jordan Wilson (6-2, 210), sophomore OL/DT Thomas Klos (6-2, 265), sophomore QB Nathan Stewart (6-0, 180), and senior WR/DB Julian Mena (5-7, 165). Other returnees are seniors Michael Warkentien (WR/DB), Sebastian Paiz (WR/DB), Brandon Mikhail (RB/DB), Dorien Vazquez (OL/DL), juniors Ezra Lewitan (RB/LB), Gabe Salgado (OL/DL), and sophomore Jack Tinajero (WR/DB). Heading the list of newcomers are seniors Eli Lopez (WR/DB), Aiden Novello (OL/DL), and juniors Maverick Murguia (WR/DB) and Carmello Cruz (WR/DB). The Bison open the season at Elgin on Aug. 26. "We are looking forward to competing in the Upstate Eight," said Lynch.

Glenbard East

2021 fall record: 7-3 overall, 7-2 in UEC.

Coach: John Walters, 11th year.

Worth noting: Returning seven offensive starters and six defensive starters from a team that

finished third in the Upstate Eight behind **South Elgin** and Glenbard South a year ago, the Rams have plans of returning to the postseason for the fourth consecutive season (2020-21 campaign shortened due to COVID). "This is an experienced group," said Walters. "We have a lot of returning players who saw playing time last year. The strength of our team will lie within the defensive front seven." That group includes 3 returning all-conference players in defensive ends Delmario Taylor (6-3, 225), Troy Cooper (6-4, 230), and defensive tackle Demontay Mack (6-3, 255). Offensively, quarterback Dillon Williams (5-10, 180) saw significant time last year, along with returning receivers Dailen Zollicofer (5-9, 160) and Yassin Nabil (5-9, 160). Other returnees are CB Raul Garcia (5-8, 165), RB/S Dimitri Hritz (5-10, 190), CB Kameron Mabins (5-10, 160), RB John Seybold (5-10, 180), RB/TE Anthony Heidkamp (5-10, 185), and LB Augustus Winkler (5-10, 190). Top newcomers include WR/DB Eric McClain (5-10, 170), WR Amonte Cook (5-6, 155), OL/DL Dan Zlatatov (6-4, 200), DL Jordan Boykin (5-10, 235), LB/QB Blake Salvino (6-1, 190), and S Aaron Kelly (5-8, 160). The Rams open the season with back-to-back games against 2021 playoff qualifiers **Larkin** and **South Elgin**. "We are really excited about this group," said Walters.

Glenbard South

2021 fall record: 9-2 overall, 8-1 in UEC.

Coach: Ryan Crissey, 9th year.

Worth noting: Can the Raiders challenge **South Elgin**, Glenbard East and **Bartlett** for the Upstate Eight championship? Led by a talented group of returnees, headed by junior wide receiver and Notre Dame commit Cam Williams (37 catches, 671 yards, 11 TDs last season), senior RB/OLB Jalen Brown (6-2, 205), who has received 6 Division I offers (Army, Navy, Bucknell, Kent State, Northern Iowa, North Dakota), and OT/DE Owen Difrancio (6-3, 230), a University of Ohio commit, the answer should be -- yes. "I feel that we have the makings of a very solid team," said Crissey, who has guided the Raiders to 7 consecutive playoff appearances (2021 season shortened due to COVID). "The expectations are to make the playoffs and fight for a conference championship," added Crissey. The Raiders also return junior QB Michael Champagne (1,520 yards passing, 22 TDs, 7 INT, 2 rushing TDs in 2021) and senior TE Owen

Gibson (6-4, 225), OT Brock Zellinger (6-4, 298), and C Edwin Tchapda (6-0, 283) on offense, while the defense is anchored by DB D'Manual Payton, DB Kyran Taylor, DE Jack Wilharm, Gibson and Difrancio (55 tackles, 12 sacks a year ago). The list of newcomers includes WR/DB Anthony Colby (6-0, 165), WR/DB Alex Ortiz (5-10, 175), WR/DB Joe Demeo (5-8, 150), RB/LB Luke Christie (5-8, 185), OL/DL Danny Langner (6-1, 240), OL/DL Christian Cairo (5-10, 245), and WR/DB Gabe Danguilan (5-7, 160), a transfer from Glenbard West. "The varsity team's goals are to have a team cumulative GPA of 2.9 (4.0 scale), complete two community service projects by Week 9, and to have the highest point differential in Class 5A," said Crissey.

Larkin

2021 fall record: 5-5 overall, 5-3 in UEC.

Coach: Grant Dietz, 2nd year.

Worth noting: Dietz enjoyed a memorable coaching debut during the Royals' 56-0 victory over Fenton a year ago. He also guided the Royals to their first postseason berth since 2006 last season, as well as a 30-28 cross-town triumph over Elgin to claim the "Town Jug." "This year's team has a tough challenge ahead," said Dietz. "We want to build from last year's team which finished with a winning record in the Upstate Eight, made the state playoffs, and brought back the 'Thunder Bucket' and 'Town Jug.'" The list of top returnees includes senior LB/PK Hector Flores (6-0, 220), senior DB Chevelle Clements (5-10, 190), and junior LB Jalen Miller (5-10, 215). Flores recorded 95 tackles, including 13 for loss, 2 sacks and a pair of caused fumbles while connecting on 18 of 20 PAT attempts. Clements, who had 81 tackles (14 for loss) a year ago, has the interest of several colleges, including Quincy, the current home of former Royals Jamarion Stubbs and Dontrell Maxie. Newcomers are senior RB/LB Anthony Mora (5-9, 160), junior QB Jaheim Vincent (5-11, 140), and junior WR/DB Terrance Boone (5-11, 130). "Our numbers have grown at our lower levels," said Dietz. "The players have worked hard throughout the summer. There is a lot to be excited about for Larkin football."

South Elgin

2021 fall record: 10-1 overall, 8-0 in UEC.

Coach: Dragan Teonic, 5th year.

Worth noting: The 2-time defending UEC champions own a 25-3 record over the past 3 seasons, with a pair of playoff losses to Chicago Catholic League Blue state semifinalists (Marist and Brother Rice). Defensively, the Storm has allowed just 70 (2019) and 72 (2021) points over the last two full seasons, along with only 3 regular-season touchdowns last year. However, the team returns its fewest defensive starters in Teonic's coaching tenure. Senior LB Michael Tringali (6-1, 210) anchors a Storm defense that recorded 5 shutouts in 2021. Offensively, **South Elgin** welcomes back All-UEC OL Nathan Dinse (6-2, 220) and All-UEC RB/WR Mason Montgomery (6-1, 180), along with returning starters OL Hernan Cortez (5-11, 205), QB Jacob Sullivan (6-0, 200), and WR Kyle Steinhofer (6-0, 175). Supporting the cause will be TE/DE Vince Costante (5-11, 205), OL/DL Eddie Ramirez (6-1, 240), OL/DL Tommy Roath (5-10, 265), RB/LB Ari Kravis (5-10, 200), RB Jordan Green (5-9, 200), WR/DB Lucas Noworol (5-10, 175), LB/DE Isaiah Alejandre (5-11, 200), LB Josh Camacho (5-10, 190), WR/DB Denver Davis (5-11, 180), LB Christian Tecza (5-11, 180), TE/DL Joey Cronin (6-0, 200), OL/DL Hyun Ko (5-9, 230), and WR/DB Kyle Corbin (5-9, 165). "We have a very good team coming back but lack depth in a few spots," said Teonic. "We're stronger than we've ever been. Our off-season was very good to us, and our kids maximized their time." South Elgin heads into the season riding a 14-game conference winning streak as well as a 14-game home winning streak.

Streamwood

2021 fall record: 3-6 overall, 3-6 in UEC.

Coach: Keith McMaster, 3rd year.

Worth noting: The 2021 campaign offered a bunch of "what-ifs" for the Sabres, who suffered several close defeats -- 59-58 to **Bartlett**, 34-30 to **Elgin**, and 24-17 to East Aurora. "We feel that the team is headed in the right direction even though we were 3-6 last season," said McMaster. "Had three plays gone differently, we could've been 6-3 last season. This is a mantra that we've been preaching throughout the summer and training camps. We must finish

ballgames." The Sabres' overhauled defense figures to be anchored by senior DEs Christian Clark (6-1, 190) and Alexander Calo (6-2, 175). Offensively, senior linemen James Rivera (6-4, 220) and Armando Vega-Reyes (5-11, 225) have been a part of a team that rushed for more than 2,800 yards last season. Senior RB Jaiden Thomas (6-1, 175) received limited reps a year ago. Leading newcomers are junior RB Taro Ishikawa (5-10, 180), junior LB Chris Marquez (6-0, 205), junior CB Genaud Phillips (6-0, 150), and sophomore RB Jaiden Rumble (5-11, 165). "The team is young and will need leadership from the few players that were here last season," said McMaster. "We're working many players in different positions while placing our best 11 on the field. The last two seasons, the team has relied on the talents of a few -- this year, we must rely on the team."

West Chicago

2021 fall record: 1-8 overall, 1-8 in UEC.

Coach: Adam Chavez, 1st year.

Worth noting: Chavez takes over a program that has posted a 1-8 record in 6 of the past 7 seasons (2020 season shortened due to COVID) and hasn't reached the state playoffs since 2002. However, he is optimistic that things are headed in the right direction. "We have a large increase in participation in summer camp from last year," said Chavez. "Our freshman numbers have seen an increase from previous years." Chavez has plenty of experience, having coached at Hinsdale Central, Plainfield South, North Chicago, Vernon Hills, Morton, Port St. Lucie (Fla.), Cimarron Memorial (NV), and Eldorado (NV). Top returnees include RB Jaden Bates, G Alexis Correa, T Alan Cuautle, DE Mark Wimbush, QB/LB Adrian Munoz, RB Joey Ferruzza, and CB Johnny Montana. Juniors Vincent Muci (FB), Krystian Roldan (QB), and sophomores Maha Aung (WR), Tommy Doyle (WR), and Robert Lee (DB) head the list of varsity newcomers. West Chicago will be tested immediately with its first 3 games against playoff qualifiers -- **South Elgin**, **Bartlett** and Glenbard East -- who combined for a 23-3 conference record in 2021.

Five players to watch

Hector Flores, Larkin, LB, sr.: Flores enjoyed an outstanding season a year ago, amassing 95 tackles, including 13 for loss. Also was 18 of 20 on PAT kicks.

Matt Lawson, Elgin, RB/DB, jr.: An All-UEC selection last season, Lawson ranks as the 14th best Illinois player in the 2023 class.

Mason Montgomery, South Elgin, RB/WR, sr.: Montgomery returns to the Storm backfield after a successful 2021 campaign. Earned All-UEC accolades for the conference champions.

Delmario Taylor, Glenbard East, DE, sr.: One of three All-UEC returnees on the defensive line for the Rams.

Cam Williams, Glenbard South, WR, jr.: The Notre Dame commit is a human highlight reel, evidenced by his 37-catch, 671-yard, 11-TD performance from a year ago.

Five can't miss matchups

Bartlett at Streamwood, Aug. 26: Season opener for both teams will be hard-pressed to duplicate last year's contest, won by Bartlett, 59-58.

South Elgin at Glenbard South, Sept. 30: Expect a packed house in Glen Ellyn when last season's top two teams in the Upstate Eight reconvene.

Elgin at Larkin, Oct. 14: The Town Jug will once again be on the line when these cross-town teams collide at Memorial Field.

Glenbard East at Glenbard South, Oct. 14: The two UEC title contenders will meet for the fifth time since 2016, with each side winning a pair.

Bartlett at South Elgin, Oct. 14: UEC rivalry week continues with a U-46 battle that seldom

disappoints.