

Press Clippings 08/25/21

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Spotlight on football: Receiver. Running Back. Defensive back. Clem McCullough is 'very hyped' to see how he stacks up for Elgin

by Paul Johnson; Note: This article was also published at chicagotribune.com

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Senior receiver/defensive back Clem McCullough has made the move from St. Edward to Elgin for his senior season. (Paul Johnson / The Beacon-News)

Life has changed pretty quickly for Clem McCullough.

The senior receiver/defensive back has found school to be a bit different, going from the cozy confines of St. Edward to the larger campus at **Elgin**.

"It's completely different, just having everybody surround you in the hallways walking to class," McCullough said. "It's been a little hassle, but I'm trying to get from class to class, try to be the first one in class and participate."

Friday night will be different as well for McCullough. Making the move from Class 2A St. Edward to 8A Elgin will mean a jump up in competition.

He'll see how he stacks up starting out against East Aurora at Memorial Field.

"I've never played on this big of a stage," McCullough said. "Going from Class 2A to 8A is a big jump, but I'm most definitely ready.

"I don't know yet, but I'm definitely ready to see the competition and go against them because that's what football is all about. I'm just ready all around."

That's a good thing because the one thing that coach Anthony Mason has shown during his tenure at Elgin is he will use his best players early and often.

That means McCullough will be all over the field Friday.

"He does everything we ask him to do," Mason said. "We have a talent that we're definitely going to utilize, especially how we lean on our top players to make plays when we need them.

"He's going to be everywhere. We're not expecting him to leave the field very often."

On offense, it's hard to peg McCullough into a position. He'll line up at running back or pop out into the slot to become a receiver.

"In our offense, our receivers are running backs as well," Mason said. "We do a lot of things with our slot guys. He'll be next to the quarterback, then line up in the slot, everywhere."

McCullough's likely college position will be in the defensive backfield, however.

Mason knows a thing or two about that spot, having been a defensive back at Northern Illinois during his playing days.

In the spring, McCullough led St. Edward with 48 tackles and three interceptions.

"I think he's a high-level defensive back," Mason said. "I think he can go mid-major if he has a dynamic season. He could go even higher now that he's really learning and honing in on his technique.

"I'm sure some smaller schools will be looking to snatch him up, so the high-level programs better get to him ASAP."

To that end, McCullough attended camps at Air Force, Illinois State and Chattanooga over the summer to put his skills to the test.

“Going to those camps, I just tried to absorb everything I possibly could,” McCullough said. “Just bringing that to the field, it will show and it will pay off.”

He’s ready to start that showcase under the Friday night lights of Memorial Field.

McCullough has never played in an environment like the one that awaits him, but he’s ready for the challenge.

“It’s most definitely exciting — can’t wait,” McCullough said. “To get to go out there with these boys in my last year, I’m just very hyped.

“Who knows what happens? I’m just ready.”

Team: Elgin.

Spring record: 4-2.

Offensive leaders: Matthew Lawson, sophomore, RB; Clem McCullough, senior, WR; Tony Rios, senior, C; James Syrek, junior, QB.

Defensive leaders: Adyn Avina, junior, CB; Adam Lambaz, junior, DT; Tayvion Mitchell, senior, LB; Will Zamecnik, senior, DT.

Playoff history: Eleven playoff appearances, most recently 2019.

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Parents of students react to enforcement actions

by Seth Hancock; Note: This story also ran in The Examiner of South Elgin and in The Examiner of Streamwood

School District U-46 is defending its actions, which could be viewed by some as child endangerment, while some concerned parents feel unheard.

Former Board of Education member Jeanette Ward posted on social media that her daughter, Cheyenne, “refused to wear a face mask at the door of South Elgin High School” on the first day of school, on Aug. 16, and school staff not only denied her an opportunity to learn but also did nothing to assure her safety when she walked away. Ultimately, Cheyenne was safe, but South Elgin staff did not make sure of it and Ward and her husband Bill did not get a call from Principal Kurt Johansen at “about 11:30 am.”

On the second day, South Elgin staff “ushered her to the Dean Jamie Becker’s office” and threatened an out-of-school suspension and she was not allowed to play with her golf team because Cheyenne showed her face. On the third day, Ward’s daughter withdrew from the school district and the family is moving out of state.

Such actions contradict Superintendent Tony Sanders' own Aug. 9 memo which stated the district's own allowable discipline in the Student Code of Conduct "may not suffice for continued or intentional non-compliance," and there's little the district can do. Furthermore, the code states the district doesn't "use seclusion" measures, which is exactly what not allowing a child go to school is.

The Examiner asked Johansen what his staff did to make sure the minor who was denied access was safe and if the school immediately called the parents. He did not respond but rather Sanders did, defending the action using the same code he publicly stated does not likely give authority for the actions taken.

Another South Elgin parent, Michael Reid, addressed the board at the Monday, Aug. 23 meeting. His son, a varsity football player, was forced to quarantine for sitting close to someone who tested positive.

Reid said he tried to contact the school multiple times before getting a response and received "conflicting information" and non-answers from the school. Furthermore, the district said he's not allowed to get his son, who is not sick, a COVID-19 test from a family doctor to prove he doesn't need to be quarantined.

"I may not be a genius but I'm smart enough to realize the fact this contact tracing system's flawed because for two days, the individual my son was a close contact with still walked the halls, ate lunch with others and may have participated in extracurricular activities outside the classroom," Reid said.

Others spoke as well, stating Sanders and board members are not responding to their emails and are ignoring the public.

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States' benefits report presented at U-46 meeting

by Seth Hancock; Note: This story also ran in The Examiner of South Elgin and in The Examiner of Streamwood

On average, **School District U-46** employees made \$98,612 in salaries and benefits and took 12.2 sick days in Fiscal Year 2021 according to the salaries and benefits report generated by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

The 48-page report was presented to the Board of Education at its meeting on Monday, Aug. 9.

The salaries and benefits in the report represents just over half of the \$420.1 million budgeted for salaries and benefits in FY2021. Certain staff and certain income expenditures, like stipends, are excluded from the report.

Districts are required to send information to the ISBE "on or before Oct. 1 of each year, the base salary and benefits of all administrators and teachers employed by the school district; present the report at a school board meeting; submit it to the district's regional superintendent of schools; and post the report on the district's internet website," the agenda item stated.

The state generates the report which is sent to the school districts.

In previous years, it was suggested a disclaimer be added to the U-46 report that it is “misleading” by former board member Phil Costello who said “there are significant disclosure limitations since the report only provides 60 percent of total compensation. Most employees on the list have multiple sources of U-46 compensation beyond the amount listed.”

The salaries listed in the report totaled \$193.7 million and \$247.9 million with benefits included: other benefits (\$34.4 million), retirement enhancements (\$18.9 million) and annuities (\$909,698).

There were 2,514 full-time employees included in the report who took 30,681 sick days, for the 12.2 average, and 2,000 vacation days. The district’s teachers’ contract allows for 12 sick days.