

Press Clippings for 8/26/2022

Elgin News Digest: School board salutes U-46 Special Olympics champs; reception planned for new river exhibit at Elgin History Museum; Kane regional office providing hygiene kits for students

By Mike Danahey
The Courier-News



Staff members from the Kane County Regional Office of Education prepare personal hygiene kits that to be distributed to students in need throughout the school year. (Kane County Office of Education / HANDOUT)

School board salutes U-46 Special Olympics champs

School Board members Monday recognized three District U-46 students for their achievements at the Illinois Special Olympics held in June in Bloomington.

The first-place winners were:

- Evelyn Diem, a sophomore at Elgin High School, standing long jump;

- Charles Hall, an 8th-grader at **Kenyon Woods Middle School** in South Elgin, 50-meter run;
- Kaylie Behrens, a 2022 graduate of **Bartlett High School**, 50-meter run. Behrens is now participating in the district's **Secondary Work Experience Program**.

Each student received an “Accent on Achievement” certificate from the board. The presentation can be viewed at www.youtube.com/user/schooldistrictu46.

Reception planned for new river exhibit at Elgin museum

A free opening reception for the “Elgin’s Fox River: An Environmental History” exhibit at the Elgin History Museum will be held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 30.

The Fox River was the main reason James Gifford settled in what is now Elgin in 1835, and the exhibit — developed in partnership with Friends of the Fox River — explores how people have used the waterway and how it’s changed over the centuries.

It also looks at the river’s uses, from manufacturing and drinking water to river islands and recreation.

Register to attend the event at elginhistory.org. The museum is at 360 Park St.

Kane regional office providing hygiene kits for students

The Kane County Regional Office of Education Youth Outreach will be distributing personal hygiene kits for students in need in county-based schools.

Kits include shampoo, conditioner, body wash, deodorant, wet wipes, laundry detergent, toothbrush, toothpaste and dental floss and will be provided to qualifying students as needed, officials said.

The distribution is part of the Regional Office of Education’s goal of making sure all students have what they need to be prepared for class every day.

For more information, go to www.kaneroe.org.

Kids’ Outside Fair planned for Saturday in Geneva

State Reps. Keith Wheeler, R-Oswego, and Dan Ugaste, R-Geneva, will hold a free Kids’ Outside Fair from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 27, at Chapelstreet Church, 3435 Keslinger Road in Geneva.

The fair will feature nearly 50 state and local agencies, nonprofit organizations and local businesses covering a wide range of educational, health and child care, recreational and community services for families and children, organizers said.

Special attractions will include a Touch-A-Truck exhibit with more than 20 trucks and a LifeNet medical helicopter landing at 10:30 a.m.

For more information, call Wheeler's office at 630-345-3464 or Ugaste's office at 630-797-5530 or visit their websites at repkeithwheeler.com and repugaste.com.

Rick Armstrong's top 10 football teams and 25 players to watch in the Aurora and Elgin area for the 2022 season

By Rick Armstrong
Aurora Beacon-News



Batavia linebacker Tyler Jansey (7), a Wisconsin commit, chases St. Charles North quarterback Ethan Plumb (10) in a game on Friday, Oct. 22, 2021. (John Konstantaras / The Beacon-News)

TOP 10 TEAMS

1. Batavia (10-1): Bulldogs have another strong defense, led by Power Five recruits in linebackers Tyler Jansey (Wisconsin) and Jack Sadowsky (Iowa State). Junior quarterback Ryan Boe is back for second season as starter to head balanced offense. Defending DuKane Conference champs seek 11th straight playoff appearance under [coach Dennis Piron](#).
2. Oswego (6-4): Panthers look to defend shared Suburban Prairie West title with Plainfield North behind veteran quarterback [Cruz Ibarra](#), who will throw to tight end Deakon Tonielli (Michigan) and wide receiver [Jordan Katzenbach](#). Panthers will run like they always do behind revamped O-line. Keep an eye on junior defensive end Taiden Thomas.
3. Oswego East (6-4): Look for dual-threat quarterback Tre Jones (Navy) to spread the ball around for Wolves, who have become a playoff regular under [coach Tyson LeBlanc](#) and look to make postseason for eighth time in his 11 years. Leading tackler Oshobi Odior returns to lead defense and also will be featured in running game.
4. Yorkville (6-5): Division I recruits Andrew Laurich (Colorado State) and Jake Davies (Wyoming) lead what should be stout defense featuring fellow linemen [Andrew Zook and Amani Kortie](#). Linebackers Blake Kersting and Ben Alvarez also will make their mark, and running back Gio Zeman could have big year.
5. Jacobs (8-4): Quarterback [Max Benner](#), a second-year starter, has big targets in tight ends [Grant Stec and Nick True](#). Stec, a 6-6 junior, has more than 20 Division I offers. True is a 6-5 senior.



Oswego East's Oshobi Odior (36) churns out extra yardage against Yorkville during a Southwest Prairie Conference game on Friday, April 2, 2021. (Jon Cunningham / The Beacon-News)

6. **South Elgin** (10-1): Senior Mason Montgomery, a 1,000-yard rusher last season, also will be used at wide receiver as the Upstate Eight Conference champs try to get him as many touches as possible. [Kyle Steinhofer](#) will do a ton, playing wide receiver, cornerback, kicker and return specialist.
7. Marmion (7-4): Six starters return for strong defense headlined by defensive ends Ivan Erickson (Illinois State) and Zach Bostrand. [Coach Dan Thorpe](#) believes junior linebacker [Jack Leshner](#) will be a Division I recruit. Glenbard North transfer Ryan Prell could power offense at quarterback.
8. St. Charles North (4-5): Winner of quarterback battle between sophomore [Ethan Plumb](#) and senior [Will Vaske](#) will have plenty of options in running back Drew Surges and receivers Jake Furtney and Anthony Taormina as North Stars attempt to get back into the playoffs.
9. Geneva (6-5): Vikings returned to playoffs after six-year drought but graduated a ton of skill players. Cupboard isn't bare, however. Sophomore receiver Talyn Taylor is already drawing Power Five offers.
10. Kaneland (5-5): Junior quarterback Troyer Carlson should continue to put up big numbers throwing to talented targets Aric Johnson, Johnny Spallasso and Dominick DeBlasio. Development of both lines will be key for Knights.



Batavia linebacker Jack Sadowsky (6), an Iowa State commit, stops St. Charles North running back Drew Surges (6) during a DuKane Conference game on Friday, Oct. 22, 2021. (John Konstantaras / The Beacon-News)

THE 25 PLAYERS TO WATCH

[Ryan Boe](#), Batavia, junior, quarterback; [Max Bray](#), Aurora Christian, junior, quarterback; [Troyer Carlson](#), Kaneland, junior, quarterback; [Jake Davies](#), Yorkville, senior, defensive end; [Ivan Erickson](#), Marmion, senior, defensive end; Jake Furtney, St. Charles North, senior, tight end; [Tyler Jansey](#), Batavia, senior, linebacker; Aric Johnson, Kaneland, junior, wide receiver; [Tyler Johnston](#), West Aurora, senior, offensive line; [Tre Jones](#), Oswego East, senior, quarterback; [Andrew Kolich](#), West Aurora, senior, wide receiver; [Blake Kersting](#), Yorkville, senior, linebacker; [Andrew Laurich](#), Yorkville, senior, defensive end; [Gino Martino](#), West Aurora, senior, quarterback; [Mason Montgomery](#), [South Elgin](#), senior, running back; [Achilles Obert](#), Oswego, senior, offensive line; [Oshobi Odior](#), Oswego East, senior, linebacker; [Keegan Otte](#), Dundee-Crown, senior, running back; [Jack Sadowsky](#), Batavia, senior, linebacker; [Johnny Spallasso](#), Kaneland, senior, defensive back; [Drew Surges](#), St. Charles North, senior, linebacker; [Talyn Taylor](#), Geneva, sophomore, wide receiver; [Deakon Tonielli](#), Oswego, senior,

tight end; [Owen Valek](#), Oswego East, senior, kicker; [Ryan Whitwell](#), Batavia, senior, defensive back.

Scouting Week 1 Fox area football games

By Mike Miazga, Joe Stevenson and Jake Bartelson
Daily Herald Correspondent
Shaw Local News Network



Wide receiver Drew Gerke will be one of the keys to how far Batavia can go this season, starting Saturday in Chicago against Phillips. *Sandy Bressner*/sbressner@shawmedia.com

Batavia at Phillips

When: 7 p.m. Saturday at Gately Stadium in Chicago.

Last matchup: Batavia 33, Phillips 6 (2021)

About the Bulldogs: Batavia appears reloaded for a defense of its DuKane Conference title last season. Significant production from its backfield is graduated, but quarterback Ryan Boe is back for his second season starting and will pilot an offense that is also bringing back top receiver Drew Gerke. Luke Alwin and Brady Ninowski also will factor into the mix in the

passing game. The Bulldogs also return Jack Sadowsky, Tyler Jansey and Brody Osborne at linebacker.

About the Wildcats: Phillips is coming off a 9-3 season that concluded in the Class 4A quarterfinals. A few names to watch are Keeven Blanton, a 285-pound two-way tackle, who was an all-conference selection, senior defensive back Terrance Collins and running back Dayvone Rainey, who had 124 rushing yards in last year's season opener.

Lincoln-Way Central at St. Charles East

When: 7:30 p.m. Friday

Last matchup: Lincoln-Way Central 24, St. Charles East 14 (1999)

About the Knights: It was a bumpy ride for the Knights last season, as they finished on a five-game losing streak. While that slide certainly wasn't the goal or the ideal, it did allow Lincoln-Way Central to give plenty of players an opportunity and leaves them with 10 returning starters and several other players that have a handle on what it takes to win at the varsity level. Although not one of those returning starters, new junior quarterback Michael Kuehl has shown he has a solid handle on the position and should be able to help Lincoln-Way Central's offense be more proficient, as the Knights averaged less than 12 points per game last season.

About the Saints: St. Charles East was another program that scuffled last season, finishing 2-7. The Saints also are undergoing a coaching transition with an offense that doesn't have a whole lot of experienced players. Instead, St. Charles East probably will lean fairly heavily on a defense that will be stabilized by defensive end Austin Barrett, an Indiana University recruit. Like Lincoln-Way Central, St. Charles East seems likely to lean on its defense early while a somewhat inexperienced offense gets its bearings.

St. Charles North at Palatine

When: 7 p.m. Friday

Last matchup: St. Charles North 24, Palatine 0 (2021)

About the North Stars: St. Charles North will be looking for its third consecutive win over the Pirates to open a season, minus the shortened regular season in 2020. Sophomore quarterback Ethan Plumb is poised to reopen as the starter after his nine-game freshman season. Drew Surges and Anthony Taormina will be focal points for an offense looking to get off to a quick start. Defensively, Surges again, will be key at linebacker after being the second leading tackler last season.

About the Pirates: Palatine appears in good shape heading into a season following a second round playoff exit. The can't miss player on the field will be 6-foot-6 defensive tackle Jaylen Williams, who has five Division I offers to open his sophomore season. Quarterback Grant Dersnah will be back, as will third-year running back Dominick Ball. Thomas Coroneous caught 55 passes last year, and should figure to get consistent looks.

Burlington Central at Hampshire

When: 7 p.m. Friday

Last matchup: Burlington Central won last year's season opener, 28-25, over Hampshire

About the Rockets: Former assistant coach Brian Iossi takes over for Brian Melvin, who took an assistant coaching position with NAIA Judson University. ... RB Joey Kowall (329 yards) is the Rockets' returning rushing leader and RB Michael Ganziano ran for 180. WR Jake Herman is the leading returning receiver with 14 receptions. ... DL James Muettert is was an All-FVC player on the line. ... Burlington Central won two of its first three games last season, but got only one more win after that.

About the Whip-Purs: Hampshire made the postseason for the first time since 2015 and lost a close game to Moline, 48-42, in the first round of the playoffs. ... QB Tyler Fikis moved to South Carolina and was a huge loss after accounting for almost 2,700 yards from scrimmage.

Fikis started for two years. ... RB Tristan Villarreal returns in the backfield after getting some work there last year. ... TE-LB Gage Homola and OL-DL Josh Rojas return on both offense and defense. ... Hampshire ended a 24-game winning streak in Week 8 of the 2019 season and is 11-6 since that point

Cary-Grove at Dundee-Crown

When: 7 p.m. Friday

Last matchup: C-G beat D-C, 51-10, in last year's season opener.

About the Trojans: C-G is the defending Class 6A state champion after a scintillating 37-36 victory over East St. Louis. The Trojans, who open the season tied at No. 4 in The Associated Press Class 6A poll, graduated most of their starters, but this is a program looking for its 18th consecutive playoff appearance with two state championships in the last four years. ... FB Colin Desmet switches from linebacker and will see a lot of carries in the Trojans' triple-option. QB Gavin Henriques, who saw a lot of second-half action in blowout victories, takes over running the offense. ... DL Thomas Burton and LB Connor Anderson are two other returning starters. ... Also of note is that C-G's junior varsity and freshman-sophomore groups were undefeated last season.

About the Chargers: D-C has some players to be excited about, starting with RB Keegan Otte, who was among the area rushing leaders with 1,064 yards on 211 carries. ... WR-DB Henry Kennedy led the Chargers in tackles and turnovers on defense and will be one of the fastest players in the FVC. ... OL-LB Porter Leith is one of the best athletes in the school and returns on both sides.

Jacobs at Crystal Lake South

When: 7 p.m. Friday

Last matchup: Jacobs defeated South, 42-38, in last year's opener

About the Golden Eagles: Jacobs had one of its best seasons in school history, advancing to the Class 7A quarterfinals where it lost to Prospect, 35-21. ... The Eagles, No. 7 in the first Class 7A poll, return 16 starters off of that team, with TEs Grant Stec (6-6, 230) and Nick True (6-5, 220) as two of the key players. ... RBs Ben Ludlum (1,732 rushing yards) and Nasir Canty (1,366) finished first and fourth in area rushing and are graduated. RB-LB Antonio Brown will move to the backfield and is expected to get a lot of work carrying the ball. ... Junior QB Max Benner returns to run the offense again. ... DB Ashton Niehaus and LBs Paulie Rudolph and Joey Scrivani are three key returning players for the defense.

About the Gators: South lost to Harlem in the first round of the Class 6A playoffs. ... The Gators will miss graduated QB Justin Kowalak, a three-year starter who led the area with 2,276 passing yards last season. But they have RB Nate Van Witzenburg (1,182 rushing yards) and WR Michael Prokos (54 receptions) returning. ... OL Nate Compere and DL Andy Burburija are returning starters on the line. ... Brady Schroeder and Caden Casimino (a transfer from Crystal Lake Central) were vying for the QB spot.

Huntley at Crystal Lake Central

When: 7 p.m. Friday

Last matchup: Crystal Lake Central beat Huntley, 32-21, in the season opener last year

About the Red Raiders: Huntley had a string of six consecutive playoff appearances stopped last season. ... Former assistant Mike Naymola takes over after Matt Zimolzak resigned as head coach. The Raiders made the playoffs in Zimolzak's first four seasons. ... OL Luke Griskey (6-5, 260) and Eric Bower (6-6, 265) give the Raiders two big tackles and lead an offense that wants to get back on track. ... QB Sam Deligio returns for a second season as starter. RBs Haiden Janke and Zach Rios will both see time in the backfield. ... LBs Dashaun Manning and Joey Arvidson and DL Ben Wiley return to lead a defense that was No. 2 in the FVC in fewest points allowed.

About the Tigers: Central, which was two spots outside the Top 10 in the first Class 6A rankings, had one of its best seasons in school history with a trip to the Class 6A playoff quarterfinals, where it lost to eventual state champion Cary-Grove. ... QB Colton Madura was selected as FVC Offensive Player of the Year and has graduated, but Jason Penza, who filled in for three games when Madura was injured and played WR the rest of the time, will take over. Madura's playmaking will be hard to replicate, but Penza showed great speed at receiver. ... WR George Dimopoulos (32 receptions) and OL Hunter Doppke and Tommy McNeil are other key returners on offense. ... LB Jack Blum and DT Leo Diaz are two of the top defensive players who are back.

Bartlett at Streamwood

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Last matchup: Bartlett 59, Streamwood 58 (2021 at Bartlett)

About **Bartlett**: New **Bartlett** coach Milan Vuckovich remembers the Week 2 barnburner against **Streamwood** a year ago. "I was exhausted after that one, what a wild football game," he said. "I have no doubt **Streamwood** will be ready to bring it again and we must ready for their physicality and athleticism. They play fast and they play tough. We have to match their intensity from the coin toss if we want to win." Returning all-conference running-back linebacker Koleman Saylers is someone Vuckovich calls the heart and soul of the program. "He gives his all day in and day out, and has really embraced being one of the leaders in our program," he said. "This young man has a huge heart and plays well above his listed height and weight." Returning senior wideout-defensive back Jalen Davis will also be counted on, as will returning offensive lineman-linebacker Zach Meyer, "who has transformed himself into an absolute beast in the weight room," the coach said.

About **Streamwood**: Coach Keith McMaster said seniors Jaiden Thomas (6-1, 175, RB), James Rivera (6-4, 220, OL) and Christian Clark (6-1, 190, DE) will be relied upon heavily for their play and leadership after the Sabres graduated many of their starters and two-way players. "We are a young team, so the more reps we can get in at practice, the better," McMaster said.

"We had decent numbers come out over the summer and took part in many off-site events we hope will grow our experience level." As for **Bartlett**, "**Bartlett** is an annual playoff contender. They are coached well and bring it every week," McMaster said. "For us, it always comes down to blocking, tackling and execution. It doesn't matter what offense or defense we run if you can't block, tackle or execute properly."

Fenton at **Elgin**

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Last matchup: Elgin 61, Fenton 7 (at Fenton 2021)

About Fenton: "In order for us to be successful, we will need to take care of the football, contain **Elgin's** speed as best as possible, gang tackle and compete for 48 minutes," Fenton coach Matt Lynch said. Keep an eye on Jordan Wilson, Thomas Klos and Richard Swanek III. "Our biggest progression is how well the players are coming together as a team," Lynch said.

About **Elgin: Maroons** coach Anthony Mason isn't putting too much stock into Week 1 scouting reports. "Being the first game, you never know what to expect, only film from the previous season," he said. "We are a totally different team and I am sure Fenton is as well. They have a lot of returners, that's something we have scouted. We have to focus on us and being sure we know what we are doing when we attack." James Syrek will be under center for Elgin in the opener. "James earned the starting spot after struggling last year," Mason said. "He has a lot to prove and talent to display." Wide receiver Jayden Yarber will be a prime Syrek target, while Mason calls linebacker Alexis Cordero a leader on the defense and someone who will be looked upon to control the game and make plays.

Larkin at Glenbard East

When: Friday, 7 p.m.

Last matchup: Glenbard East 24, **Larkin** 7 (at Glenbard East, 2021)

About **Larkin**: A playoff team a year ago, **the Royals** have plenty of talent back in Jahiem Vincent, as well as returning all-conference linebackers Jalen Miller and Hector Flores, who will anchor the defense. Vincent was an all-state triple jumper in the spring, "and since June has matured into one of our leaders," **Royals** coach Grant Dietz said. "He's very athletic and brings a fiery competitiveness to our offense." Dietz has seen plenty of progress over the last two seasons. "I like where we are as a program," he explained. "We have come a long way in a short amount of time. Our numbers are up, the players are working hard and have responded well to the new coaches on staff." Dietz knows the Royals will encounter a tough Glenbard East squad. "They are a well-coached football program," he said. "We have to execute our offense and not beat ourselves."

About Glenbard East: Rams coach John Walters is well aware of Larkin's improvement last season. "Obviously, starting the season off against a playoff team from last year is a challenge," he said. "We played them Week 1 last year in a physical game. We need to be consistent on both sides of the ball. Focus play in and play out. Our focus needs to be on us and how we do things. Guys are bought in and working hard toward our team goals. We are at the point where we need to play a game." Rams to watch? How about Troy Cooper, Delmario Taylor and Eric McCain out of the gates.

East Aurora at Glenbard South

When: Friday, 7 p.m.

Last matchup: Glenbard South 41, East Aurora 6 (at East Aurora, 2021)

About East Aurora: "East Aurora will be very athletic, aggressive and well-coached," Glenbard South coach Ryan Crissey said. "Coach Kukoc always gets the best out of his team. We will need to play fundamentally sound football to be successful. Our speed and athleticism will be very helpful, but doing the little things right is what will make the difference."

About Glenbard South: Crissey said one marked difference since the summer is improved line play on both sides of the ball, terming the collective progression as "significant." "We are

excited to see the battles at the line of scrimmage," he added. "Our practices are highly competitive. Lots of players are battling for starting spots and playing time." South has no shortage of talent. Junior wideout Cam Williams is a Notre Dame commit. "Cam should be a concern to all defenses," Crissey said. Williams had 671 receiving yards last year and 11 touchdowns. Senior defensive end-offensive tackle Owen Difrancio is a University of Ohio commit. He's coming off a 2021 season where he led the team in sacks with 16. "I expect more of the same," Crissey said. "Offensive coordinators need to be mindful of his alignment every snap." Junior quarterback Michael Champagne, Crissey said, is poised for a breakout season with plenty of weapons to work with. "I would not be surprised if Michael were to throw for 2,000 yards this season," he added.

South Elgin at West Chicago

When: Friday, 7 p.m.

Last matchup: South Elgin 70, West Chicago 0 (at West Chicago, 2021)

About **South Elgin**: **South Elgin** coach Dragan Teonic played in high school with new West Chicago coach Adam Chavez. "Adam is a good friend and I think will do a fantastic job there," He is the ideal fit for the community and the program. We have a lot of respect for their team and we will be tested by the triple option scheme. As the years go on, West Chicago football will only get better. Week 1 is always its own challenge, and we have a lot of questions because of our youth and inexperience. Will we be tough? Will we tackle well? How will we deal with adversity? How will we cover kickoffs and punts? These are all concerns going into Week 1." Teonic said overall team strength has improved to the point it's at the highest level he's seen since being at **South Elgin**. Players such as Kyle Steinhofer, Jordna Green and Ari Kravis, Teonic noted, had great summers, and returners such as Nathan Dinse, Tommy Roath, Jake Sullivan, Vince Costante and Michael Tringali also have excelled in the offseason. Steinhofer will play on both sides of the ball, while Tringali is the team's only returning defensive starter. "Michael is a dominant linebacker," Teonic said. "We only gave up 72 points in 11 games in 2021, and we're looking for Michael to have a great season this year. He should be on everyone's radar, but an injury has slowed down his recruitment." Also keep a watch on

two-way lineman Eddie Ramirez, who bench presses 300 pounds, squats 485 and dead lifts 700. "In typical South Elgin fashion, he is as smart and tough as they come," Teonic said. "He has an incredible work ethic and strength and that should be a cornerstone for us."

About West Chicago: "South Elgin will post a great challenge for us Week 1," Chavez said. "They are one of the top teams in the state. They are very well-coached and play sound schemes on both sides of the ball. We will have to play error-free assignment football in order to have a chance." Chavez likes the progression of A-back Jaden Bates and B-back Vincent Muci. "Jaden is an explosive athlete who has big play potential," he said. "Vincent is a tough, physical runner who is our strongest player on the team." Krystian Roldan and Adrain Munoz will both play the quarterback position. "Both kids bring a different dimension," Chavez said.

St. Francis at Lake Forest

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Last matchup: Lake Forest 41, St. Francis 24 (Week 1 at St. Francis)

About St. Francis: Coming off an 8-3 season, the Spartans have plenty to be excited about. Two-way lineman TJ McMillen is committed to Illinois and has been voted the best OL-DL in the conference the last two years. Running back-defensive back Amari Head has put on 20 pounds of muscle in the offseason and will be St. Francis' featured back. "He looks more explosive and faster. He should have a breakout season," St. Francis coach Bob McMillen said. Quarterback Alessio Milivojevic (6-2, 200) has offers from Ole Miss and Bowling Green, McMillen noted. "He can make all the throws, is a leader and a person that works on his game consistently," he said. McMillen added leadership and maturity have been the Spartans' biggest progressions heading into the season-opener. "The guys have been pushing each other hard in practice and holding each other accountable," he said. "They are showing up early for meetings and practice, and staying late to make sure they understand everything."

About Lake Forest: The Scouts are coming off a state semifinal appearance a year ago. "Lake Forest is a very tough team," McMillen said. "We need to be able to protect and block up front."

They like to blitz a lot. Our quarterback has to have time to get the ball out and give our wide receivers a chance to make some plays. We need to establish the run. We are big up front and we need to move people and open holes."

Marian Central Catholic at Wheaton Academy

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

About Marian Central: "Look, everyone knows Marian Central hasn't made the playoffs in the past three or so years, but you can't for a moment group this program with others in the same situation," Wheaton Academy coach Jim Johanik said. "The schedule they played over this period is flat-out tough and on film they played well. This is a tough Week 1 opponent with a storied and proud history. We know Marian can't afford to come into Week 1 with us being anything but prepared. We have to gain confidence and become veterans quickly. We have more than a few guys with athletic giftedness, but they lack playing time. If we stay healthy, we should be a better team as the season progresses and this experience kicks in."

About Wheaton Academy: Senior quarterback Belay Brummel threw 12 touchdowns against 0 interceptions last year playing behind a senior captain in 2021. "He's stepped up further in his role this summer," Johanik said. "He can get the ball to anywhere on the field in a hurry." Senior two-way lineman Jaret Jawor is a transfer from Lincoln-Way Central and is also a lacrosse standout. Fellow lineman Ethan Brunner is the youngest brother of four to come through the school. "Ethan is off-the-charts intelligent and it shows in his offensive line play," Johanik said. Johanik likes what he has seen this summer and through the preseason. "This team has been coached hard and they have responded well, probably better than any team I have been a part of, given where we started from."

Aurora Central Catholic at Wauconda

When: Friday, 7 p.m.

About ACC: A new matchup here for Wauconda after the Bulldogs opened last season against Proviso West at home. Aurora Central Catholic competes in the Metro Suburban Conference

Blue Division and went 3-6 a year ago. "Aurora Central has a lot of starters returning this year, eight on defense and five on offense," Wauconda coach Chris Prostka said. "This is the first time we are playing them and we are excited for the opportunity. We will need to take care of the factors we can control. We need to take care of the ball on offense and pursue/tackle as a team on defense. We need to play with great effort the entire game. We expect our returning varsity players to lead the way for our players who are new to the varsity."

About Wauconda: Sophomore Liam Carney has earned a spot on the Wauconda offensive line. "Liam had a great summer and fall. He plays a hard-nosed, physical style of football," Prostka said. Senior Jacob Norris moved from quarterback to wide receiver and outside linebacker this year. "We expect Jacob to be an impact player on both sides of the ball," Prostka said. New coach Prostka said things are progressing nicely. "We feel great about our players' understanding of our schemes on offense, defense and special teams," he said. "We have made some changes from last year in all phases and our players have picked up what we have taught."

Andrew at Kaneland

When: 7:30 p.m. Friday

Last matchup: Kaneland 27, Andrew 23 (2021)

About the Knights: It was a Week 1 matchup last year, but ended up having a big say in the playoffs as Kaneland went 5-4 and Andrew 4-5.

This year, coach Pat Ryan said the Knights are improved a lot from last year. "We look like an experienced team," Ryan said. "We feel good going in. All the pieces are in place for us. It looks like we have some depth. We have some talented players back and we're excited to see what we can do." The Knights return a lot of firepower on offense, particularly in the passing game. Junior Troyer Carlson is starting for the third year and approached 3,000 passing yards last year. Aric Johnson and Johnny Spalasso return as his top targets. The running game looks to improve this year as Ryan said he hopes the line can come together with returners Austin Lilly

and Brett Larson and three newcomers. Chris Ruchaj started some last year as an injury replacement but takes over full time at running back.

About the Thunderbolts: Looking to get back to the playoffs for the first time since 2019, Andrew usually deploys a triple option that can cause teams fits. Ryan said the biggest area of improvement for the Knights needs to be the run defense, and Andrew's triple option should be a good measuring stick. "I thought that was an area last year that exposed how young and inexperienced we were," Ryan said. "But with a full year and offseason workouts and weight room in, and a year older and more experienced, they understand what varsity football is all about. It will be a good test Friday right up front to see where we're at." The key to stopping the Thunderbolts, Ryan said, is disciplined defense. "They get a good push and effectively run that triple option," Ryan said. "It only takes one of us on defense to make a mistake and we're in for a long play or a long night."

Marmion at Bishop McNamara

When: 7 p.m. Friday

Last matchup: Marmion 12, Bishop McNamara 7 (2021)

bout the Cadets: Senior defensive end Ivan Erickson certainly highlights their defense. The 6-foot-6, 247-pound defensive lineman amassed 70 tackles, four sacks, 15 tackles for loss and one fumble recovery last season. The Cadets will return two starters offensively from last season, offensive tackle Zach Weiersheuser and running back Josh Lim. Lim earned All-CCL/ESCC White honors last season and returns as a three-year varsity starter.

About the Irish: It will be the first time since 1975 that retired coach Rich Zinanni isn't on the Bishop McNamara sidelines. Running back Tony Phillips transferred away to Kankakee, but Irish do return three offensive lineman in Zach Hansen, Tucker Inman and Jared Salzman that will protect returning quarterback Deuce Allaway. Allaway also has some threats to utilize on the outside in wide receivers Jaxson and Landon Provost.

