

## Press Clippings for 9/08/2022

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## Larkin's ground game hits new gear; CL South enjoys signature win

By: Mike Miazga



Crystal Lake South's Nolan Gorken, left, and Michael Prokos, right, celebrate a Prokos touchdown last Friday during the Gators' first win over Cary-Grove since 2011. *Patrick Kunzer/for Shaw Local*

Larkin's football team saw that firsthand, particularly when it comes to the running game where major improvements occurred in a week's time.

In the Royals' opener against Glenbard East, they were limited to 29 yards rushing. A week later, Larkin exploded for 329 yards on the ground in a 14-8 win at home over Streamwood.

"It takes pressure off the quarterback when we can establish the run," Larkin coach Grant Dietz said.

Just as **Larkin** has upped its game collectively in the run game, Dietz has been pleased with the progress players such as Hectore Flores and Kevin Malone have made in a short amount of time.

"Hectore has done well at linebacker and kicker and he will be used more on offense," Dietz said. "Kevin's role in the offense will expand as well."

### **Upstate Eight Week 2 post-mortem:**

With a 10-team conference, Upstate Eight teams play a full 9-game conference schedule.

What have we learned through two weeks?

Plenty of parity exists. **Bartlett**, Glenbard South and **South Elgin** sit atop the standings, each at 2-0. Four teams are packed in the middle at 1-1 and three share the current cellar at 0-2.

Glenbard South sees **Bartlett** and **South Elgin** in consecutive games in weeks 5 (at **Bartlett**) and 6 (at home against **South Elgin**). **Bartlett** and **South Elgin** meet in Week 8 at **South Elgin**.

In other words, plenty of football to still be played.

### **Elgin update:**

**The Maroons** are 1-1 after a pair of close conference games against Fenton (win) and East Aurora (loss).

In the loss to East Aurora last week, Elgin's defense had 5 take-aways and limited the Tomcats to less than 100 yards rushing.

"We have done a good job overcoming adversity being down and missing key players," **Elgin** coach Anthony Mason said.

Lamyni Spates and Adam Lambaz have been a pair of bright spots for **Elgin**.

"Lamyni is flying around making big plays on defense and special teams," Mason said. "Adam is a leader on the line of scrimmage."

### **South Elgin update:**

Some more statistical goodies from **Storm** coach Dragan Teonic.

In a key early-season Upstate Eight Conference win at home over Glenbard East (22-6) last week, the **Storm** won the toxic ratio (plus-2).

What is the toxic ratio, you might ask? Teonic noted it's the explosive plays minus turnovers compared to the opponent.

And **South Elgin** is 32-1 under Teonic when it wins the toxic battle.

"We are 32-1 when winning this very important stat," he said.

Senior defensive end Isaiah Alejandre was a difference-maker in the Glenbard East win, playing with a busted hand.

"Isaiah exemplifies the 'South Elgin Tough Standard' that was set before him by guys such as Dylan and Axel Bernal, Vince Clinite, Vince Tringali and Justin Giannini," Teonic said.

Junior Tommy Roath was a standout on the offensive line.

"Tommy played well on an otherwise lackluster night for the offensive line," Teonic said. "He's a rock-solid person with tremendous toughness and work ethic. Tommy has been a steady player so far and is only going to get better."

### **Streamwood update:**

The Sabres attempted only 2 passes in their 14-8 Week 2 loss to Larkin, but ran for 178 yards, split mainly among the likes of junior John Ray (12 carries, 71 yards), senior Jaiden Thomas (16 carries, 59 yards) and junior Genaud Phillips (10 carries, 42 yards).

Junior Alex Trimino led the defense with 12 total tackles, while junior Cris Marquez had 9 total tackles and junior Oscar Villalpando had 6 solos and 1 tackle for loss. Kyle Thompson had an interception.

### **Crystal Lake South update:**

Caden Casimino and Brady Schroeder competed all summer to be Crystal Lake South's starting quarterback.

And while only one could win the job, both players came up big in a 43-39 Fox Valley Conference win against Cary-Grove on Friday night.

Casimino, a junior, led two scoring drives in the final five minutes of the game with the Gators trailing by 11 points, getting the go-ahead touchdown on a 26-yard pass to Nate Van Witzenburg with 30.9 seconds remaining.

Earlier on the drive, it was Schroeder who stepped in at quarterback and made a key fourth-and-1 conversion with a sneak on C-G's 31 with 1:30 left. Three plays later, the Gators took the lead.

Gators coach Rob Fontana said Casimino (22-of-29 passing, 379 yards, four TDs) and Schroeder (three catches, 25 yards) have both been supportive teammates.

"Those two guys went head-to-head all summer, and Brady knows when he moves to the outside [at receiver], he makes us a better football team," Fontana said. "They both do things a little differently. Brady's got the legs and Caden's got the arm. Those guys battled and made us

better as a whole. It allows us a lot more freedom with Brady to play defense when we need him to."

Fontana has been impressed by the work ethic of Casimino, who transferred from Crystal Lake Central.

"Caden comes into a situation not knowing anybody, and right away it was, 'I'm here to work hard, I'm going to figure everything out, and I'm going to put in extra time,' " Fontana said.

"The amount of film sessions he does with our offensive coordinator just to make sure they're all on the same page is great."

Before Friday, the Gators had not beaten Cary-Grove since 2011, a stretch of nine consecutive losses. C-G, meanwhile, entered the game on a 19-game winning streak.

Casimino said Friday's win over the defending Class 6A state champions serves as a major statement.

"It's awesome, the chemistry we have is amazing," Casimino said. "We've just got to keep our foot on the gas and just stay hungry, go all out for everything. This win is huge. It shows we can play with anyone. We can play with the best."

### **Hail to the champs:**

Speaking of C-G's streak, the Trojans' last loss came in the 2019 Class 6A playoff quarterfinals when Prairie Ridge knocked them out, 14-13. The Wolves had beaten them in Week 7 that year, 42-7.

C-G's 19-game winning streak was second-longest in the state to Wilmington, which reached 21 with a win over Lisle on Friday.

The Trojans won the 2018 6A state championship with a 14-0 record, so since the start of that season, C-G has lost only three regular-season games. It lost to Huntley and Prairie Ridge in 2019 and to South on Friday.