

Press Clippings 2/18/2022

Daily Herald

How suburban schools are reacting to mask ruling ---

2/18/2022

By Madhu Krishnamurthy



A majority of the fans were wearing masks during a recent boys' basketball game at Wauconda High School. Schools are re-examining policies following Friday's appellate court ruling. *Paul Valade | Staff Photographer*

Suburban school leaders are re-examining masking rules after the downstate appellate court ruling on the state's indoor mask requirement in schools.

The court ruled the mandate has expired and therefore an appeal of a temporary restraining order barring schools from enforcing it is "moot." School district officials now can decide for themselves how to address any indoor masking requirements.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still has an order in place requiring anyone on public transportation, including school buses, to wear a mask. Therefore, masks are required on school buses.

Here's a sampling of what schools are doing:

Arlington D25:

Arlington Heights Elementary District 25 has been in a "mask recommended" environment since Feb. 7 -- the first day of school after the temporary restraining order took effect. The district was among the defendants in the lawsuit.

Batavia D101:

Batavia Unit District 101's current policy recommends masks for everyone in schools, especially when social distancing cannot be maintained. If conditions worsen or outbreaks occur, the district may need to return to strict enforcement of masking. Meanwhile, all other mitigation strategies remain in place, officials said.

Bloomington D13:

Bloomington Elementary District 13 schools are mask optional going forward.

Central D301:

Burlington-based Central Unit District 301 transitioned to making masks optional for students, staff and visitors on Thursday ahead of the court's ruling.

"In light of the most recent JCAR (Joint Committee on Administrative Rules) ruling and based on the declining numbers of our positive cases, we have decided to move forward and implement the next phase of our mitigation plan," Superintendent Todd Stirn wrote to families. "Based on Central 301's metrics, (currently below 1% positivity), and our ability to successfully mitigate risk, we are confident that we are ready to adjust our mitigations while continuing to provide a safe learning environment for all."

COVID-positive students/employees are required to stay out of school and unvaccinated employees no longer will be required to test weekly.

Des Plaines D62:

Des Plaines Elementary District 62 is moving to a mask-recommended learning environment effective immediately. "Because of the efforts in our community regarding vaccination and mitigation, we have seen a recent downward trend of COVID-19 cases within our local and

neighboring communities, to the point that we can now consider updating some of our mitigation measures," Superintendent Paul Hertel said.

The district will maintain other mitigation strategies, including continuing physical distancing where possible, thorough contact tracing within schools and requiring all school personnel be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or submit to weekly testing.

Downers Grove D58:

There will be no changes to the status quo for Downers Grove District 58. As of Feb. 14, the district has recommended, but not required students and staff to wear a mask at school.

District 58 will not require "close contacts" to stay home from school or unvaccinated district employees to submit to weekly testing.

East Maine D63:

East Maine District 63 will shift to a recommending masks in schools Tuesday. Officials continue to strongly encourage students and staff to wear masks, in alignment with guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health and CDC. The district can reinstitute mandatory mask wearing if local COVID-19 infection rates warrant it or if masking again is required by law.

Elgin U-46:

Starting Wednesday, all Elgin Area School District U-46 schools will move to masks being strongly recommended.

"We had already begun preparing for a shift in our mitigation strategies in U-46, and planned to announce them today, because our local COVID-19 metrics continue to trend in a favorable direction," U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders wrote.

Masks will be required in all U-46 buildings only if all of three counties -- Cook, DuPage, Kane -- demonstrate a "substantial" (8% or higher positivity rates) spread of COVID-19 as defined by IDPH.

"We will review confirmed positive cases at individual school buildings, as well student absences for reported COVID-like symptoms and SHIELD test data for those sites," Sanders wrote.

If the positivity rate at any school is considered "substantial" based on confirmed positive cases, student absences due to reported symptoms, or through identification through SHIELD testing, masks would be required in that school building. The updated rules will be presented to the U-46 school board on Feb. 28.

Elk Grove D59:

Elk Grove Township District 59 schools will move to a "masks recommended" environment starting Tuesday. The school board has canceled its special meeting originally planned for next week to discuss the mask mandate ruling.

Geneva D304:

Geneva Unit District 304 will continue to follow its current practice of recommending masking for students, staff, and visitors in buildings.

Glenbard D87:

Glenbard Township High School District 87 is switching to a mask-optional approach for all students and staff effective Tuesday.

"This implementation delay will allow families and staff time to make an informed decision regarding their personal choice around this issue," Superintendent David Larson wrote.

"Until Feb. 22, we require all students, staff and visitors to wear a mask in our buildings."

Glenbrook D225:

Glenbrook High School District 225 on Friday began recommending masks, but made it optional for Glenbrook North and Glenbrook South high schools. The District 225 school board has scheduled an emergency virtual meeting for 10:30 a.m. Saturday to discuss the impact of the appellate court decision on the mask mandate and the district's staff vaccination and testing mandate.

Glenview D34:

Masks will continue to be required in Glenview District 34 schools until Feb. 28, when a "mask-recommended but not required" policy is implemented.

Huntley D158:

Huntley Community School District 158 schools will see no change in current masking requirements. The district will continue to strongly recommend masks be worn in schools.

Indian Prairie D204:

Indian Prairie Unit District 204 officials last week announced plans to implement a "strongly recommended" mask policy starting Tuesday. While students won't be divided into pods for every class based on masking decisions, teachers may allow students to switch seats. Because younger students can't be vaccinated, masks still will be required in prekindergarten and early childhood classes.

Itasca D10:

Itasca Elementary District 10 schools are mask optional.

Libertyville D70:

Libertyville Elementary District 70 already had adopted a mask-optional policy in all schools and administrative offices.

Based on the latest ruling, District 70 students and staff identified as close contacts and who are asymptomatic no longer will be required to quarantine as of Tuesday. Anyone currently in quarantine can return to school on that date.

Parents/guardians will continue to be notified if their child is identified as a close contact. Masking in those cases will be optional.

If any close contacts become symptomatic, they must not return until they have obtained a lab confirmed negative COVID test. Students who test positive for COVID will continue to be excluded for five days. They can return on day six if symptoms improve and must wear a mask through day 10.

Lake Park D108:

Lake Park High School District 108 will continue to require masks until Feb. 28, after which officials will make them optional.

Libertyville-Vernon Hills D128:

Libertyville-Vernon Hills High School District 128 started recommending masks for students, staff and volunteers Friday. The district had planned to switch Feb. 28 but accelerated the decision to drop the mask mandate.

Masks still will be required for staff in proximity to high-risk immunocompromised students and in driver education vehicles and school buses. Masking is recommended unless required by the Illinois High School Association or governing organization for after-school events, dances, athletics and other extracurricular activities.

Mundelein D75/120:

Mundelein High School District 120 and Mundelein Elementary District 75 will move to a mask-recommended status effective Tuesday, spokesman Peter Gill said. Most other COVID-19 mitigation measures in schools will remain largely unchanged, he added.

Naperville D203:

Naperville Unit District 203 officials ended a mask mandate on Tuesday, shifting to a "strongly recommended" masking policy. The district will continue the mask-optional policy going forward.

Northbrook D28:

Northbrook District 28 continues to follow local health guidance in requiring masks. The district is awaiting advice from its attorneys in considering further mitigation practices.

Northwest Suburban D214:

Masks have not been required, but are recommended in Northwest Suburban High School District 214, following the downstate judge's ruling. Since District 214 was a defendant in the lawsuit, the ruling meant district masking policy reverted to what the school board and administration adopted before Pritzker's Aug. 4 order, Superintendent David Schuler said.

Oak Grove D68:

The Oak Grove Elementary District 68 school board on Feb. 11 made masking optional and approved other measures for the Green Oaks-based district. Masking still is required for adults in proximity to high-risk immunocompromised students.

Masking is optional at extracurricular activities, such as school events, dances and athletics. Athletic events at "away" schools and field trips outside the school will follow the host's guidelines.

Unvaccinated staff members no longer are required to test weekly and staff/volunteers no longer have to submit vaccination status. Weekly testing continues for interested staff and students. Students testing positive for COVID-19 are required to quarantine for at least five days. Masks are encouraged on a return to school for days six to 10.

Palatine D15:

Palatine Township Elementary District 15 is moving to a mask-recommended teaching and learning environment as of Friday. A special meeting is scheduled Tuesday to share the full COVID mitigation plan and seek feedback and consensus from the school board on other mitigation efforts, Superintendent Laurie Heinz said.

Palatine-Schaumburg D211:

Palatine-Schaumburg High School District 211 will continue its mask-optional policy that took effect when the temporary restraining order was issued.

Round Lake D116:

The Round Lake Area Unit District 116 school board will hold a special meeting at 6 p.m. Tuesday to decide on its masking policy. The meeting can be livestreamed at youtu.be/WLiOmkHP_uM.

Schaumburg D54:

Schaumburg Township Elementary District 54 announced no changes Friday to its policy of strongly encouraging students and staff to wear masks in schools.

Stevenson D125:

Adlai E. Stevenson High School District 125 temporarily will suspend enforcement of the mask mandate on campus beginning Tuesday. The suspension is subject to change, based on outcome in the pending litigation and/or guidance from federal, state and local health departments, officials said.

The district will maintain a supply of high quality masks for faculty, staff and students and continue with other mitigation strategies, such as optional testing.

Although the current executive order regarding masking in schools remains in effect until at least March 5, recent actions have raised a "significant legal issue" regarding the district's continued authority to enforce Gov. J.B. Pritzker's mask mandate, Superintendent Eric Twadell and Principal Troy Gobble informed parents Friday morning.

Wheaton Warrenville D200:

Wheaton Warrenville Unit District 200 is not making any changes to its current mitigation practices, a spokeswoman said. The district opted for voluntary masking after the temporary restraining order was issued.

Wheeling D21:

Wheeling Township Elementary District 21 has recommended masks, but not required them since after the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules vote Wednesday not to renew the IDPH emergency rule on masking in schools.

The school board Thursday night endorsed a three-tiered masking framework: universal masking, situational, and recommended but not required -- depending on COVID-19 infection levels in individual schools.

But Superintendent Michael Connolly said Friday even after reading the appellate court ruling, he's not sure the district has the authority to enforce its new policy.

"We have the system in place, but we're not sure we can enforce it," he said. "But this is all real fluid. It's about as clear as mud in some respects. The local control issue is a little muddled."

Woodland D50:

The Woodland Elementary District 50 school board held an emergency board meeting Thursday night to discuss the COVID-19 metrics in schools. The district's plan is to transition to recommending masks but not requiring them. Since the appellate court ruling came after the meeting, the board has decided to call a special meeting Sunday afternoon to provide further direction on how to move forward.

Kane County Connects Some Kane schools update COVID-19 mitigation policies after 4th District Court rejects appeal --- 2/18/2022

The 4th District Appellate Court has turned away an appeal of the Feb. 4 Circuit Court temporary restraining order that blocks Gov. JB Pritzker's mask, vaccine and COVID-19 testing mandates for certain schools.



In response, at least two Kane County public school districts today announced updates of their COVID-19 mitigation policies.

Geneva School District 304 announced that it would continue to follow a mask-optional policy, and **School District U-46** announced it would end its mask requirement only continue

its mask requirement as long as “all of our three counties demonstrate a ‘Substantial’ (8% or higher positivity rates) spread of COVID-19 as defined by the Illinois Department of Public Health.”

In other words, the U-46 mask requirement could end sometime after Feb. 23 once infection rates fall below the “substantial” level.

According to a news release from state Sen. Don DeWitte’s Office as well as multiple media reports, Attorney General Kwame Raoul had appealed a temporary restraining order that a Sangamon County judge issued Feb. 4, blocking the state from enforcing emergency rules requiring face masks, tests of unvaccinated individuals and brief exclusion from school buildings.

The appellate court decision was made during the overnight hours of Feb. 17-18.



State Sen. Don DeWitte of St. Charles

“None of the rules found by the circuit court to be null and void are currently in effect,” the ruling reads. “Accordingly, for the following reasons, we dismiss defendant’s appeal because the expiration of the emergency rules renders this appeal moot.”

DeWitte said the Appellate Court decision is “a clear indication that Gov. Pritzker’s unilateral decision-making relative to COVID-19 must end.”

“The court ruling is not about whether people support or oppose masks,” he said. “It is about constitutional rights to due process that must be afforded to all Illinoisans, including school children and teachers.

“Based on the Circuit Court’s initial temporary restraining order, nearly two-thirds of Illinois schools have gone to ‘mask optional.’ Any attempt to reverse or stymie those local decisions will only exacerbate the chaos our schools are experiencing.”

SOURCE: state Sen. Donald DeWitte’s Office news release, media reports

Chicago Tribune – The Courier-News

Elgin News Digest: U-46 expands app for tracking school buses --- 2/18/2022

By Mike Danahey



School District U-46 has expanded its school bus app to include middle school routes. (Mike Danahey / The Courier-News)

U-46 expands app for tracking school buses

An app that allows **School District U-46** parents and students track school bus routes has been expanded to include middle school buses and should be available for elementary school routes in early March, officials said.

Versatrans MyStop was launched for U-46 in January, but initially was limited to high school bus routes. It became available for middle schools Tuesday.

The free app is updated automatically with GPS information about the current location of a bus. Parents and guardians can keep track of the school bus their children are riding in real time.

The app is available for Android and Apple devices. For more information, go to www.u-46.org/Page/18942.

WBEZ Chicago

Illinois court says students can continue to go maskless in some school districts --- 2/18/2022

By Su An and Caroline Kubzansky

Students in about 170 Illinois school districts can continue to go mask optional and reject other COVID-19 mitigations, a state appellate court ruled late Thursday night, affirming a temporary order issued by a Springfield judge earlier this month that has upended the governor's COVID mandates in schools.

The ruling likely opens the door for more school districts that aren't directly affected by the order to reject the state's COVID school rules. Already, a growing group of school districts have gone mask optional even though the governor's office insists its COVID-19 mandates remain in effect.

The Illinois Education Association, one of the state's two major teachers' unions, on Friday said school administrators report there are "at least 500 mask-recommended districts now in Illinois."

Gov. JB Pritzker said he was "disappointed" by the decision. Pritzker said he is working with the attorney general to request an expedited review from the Illinois Supreme Court.

In affirming the temporary ruling, the Fourth District Appellate Court noted a legislative committee this week objected to renewing school masking rules by the Illinois Department of Health. "We dismiss defendant's appeal because the expiration of the emergency rules renders this appeal moot," the court wrote in its decision.

The court also wrote that it is not clear the rules would be reinstated "given the changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic — which affects the State defendants' response to the pandemic."

However, the court noted the lower court's order does not restrict schools from deciding for themselves whether to require masks or other COVID mitigations.

Thomas DeVore, the attorney for families and teachers that sued, said his clients are pleased. He said that the appellate court called the governor's executive orders on masking and other COVID mandates unenforceable.

"They said that executive order in a vacuum, doesn't do anything," DeVore said of the appellate court's decision. "That really is the appellate court saying 'Your executive power that you're telling everybody you have — you don't have it.'"

In a statement, Pritzker said he was concerned about the ability to continue in-person learning. He argued that everyone in schools should continue to wear masks, but was encouraged that "the court made it clear that school districts can continue to keep their own mitigations in place."

The ruling comes almost two weeks after Sangamon County Circuit Court Judge Raylene Grischow put a temporary hold on COVID mitigations in about 170 school districts where

parents and school staff are suing to challenge mask mandates, regular testing for unvaccinated staff and quarantine rules at schools imposed by the governor. Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul filed the appeal last week as well as a motion to stop the temporary restraining order.

Thursday's ruling only pertains to the temporary hold and does not settle the underlying lawsuit.

It's been a disruptive couple of weeks for some schools. Some public school districts and Catholic school systems that weren't named in the lawsuit decided to make masks optional. And districts named in the lawsuit took differing approaches to the judge's order.

Chicago Public Schools and **Elgin U-46** continue to require masks except for students who are part of the lawsuit. CPS affirmed that decision Friday morning, noting the appellate court clarified that the original order does not prohibit districts from implementing their own safety policies. Other districts like Mount Prospect School District 57 chose to make masks optional. Some students staged walkouts, and groups of parents protested outside of schools calling for an end to the requirement. Fremont School District 79 switched to remote learning to avoid disruptions on Monday.

Students in the state's largest high school district, District 214 in the northwest suburbs, were allowed to go mask optional after Judge Grischow issued her restraining order. At one district school, John Hersey High School in Arlington Heights, opinions among students are mixed on what the school's policy should be. Most students were not wearing masks at dismissal earlier this week.

"I have not been wearing a mask ever since the mandates have been lifted, and it's a lot better without masks," said Jackie Baker, a 16-year-old student.

Other students feel it's too soon to do away with the mask requirements. Lily Miller, 16, waited outside her school wearing a KN95 mask. "Every day, less people wear masks, and it makes me a little nervous because my grandma is sick at the moment," she said. "I don't want to get her sick."

On Tuesday, the legislative committee voted against an emergency rule that would have required schools to continue mask mandates and other COVID mitigations. Republicans criticized Gov. JB Pritzker for trying to go around the judicial system, while some Democrats on the panel, known as the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR), voted to block the rule because of the ongoing litigation. After the vote, Pritzker argued his school mask mandate remained in effect.

In a filing to the appellate court on Wednesday, the attorney general's office argued that JCAR's action only related to IDPH's renewal of emergency rule rather than the governor's executive order. Therefore, the vote has little impact on the appeal. But the plaintiffs disagreed, saying that the JCAR vote weakened the state's defense for imposing COVID mitigations in schools.

Following the JCAR vote, some school districts switched to mask optional, including Maine Township High School District 207 and Park Ridge-Niles District 64. On Tuesday, the District 207 school board decided to drop the mask required because of JCAR's decision and, it said, because COVID-19 rates have dropped in the area. Last week, a group of students staged a walkout at Maine South High School because it required masks.

Northwestern University Law Professor Nadav Shoked said the original ruling wasn't clear about exactly who was subject to the order.

Pritzker has taken the restraining order to only apply to the 168 school districts that are defendants in the case. But Republicans and other people who oppose masks have said it means the whole state is no longer under a mandate. Shoked said both sides have an argument.

"It's not clear whether [the order] applies throughout the land or just in a specific court," he said.

Beyond that, Shoked said neither the governor nor the plaintiffs are making "ludicrous" arguments in the appeal.

"Those grand terms of our political debates about freedom versus government, that's really not been [Grischow's] position," Shoked said.

Rather, he said, Grischow's justification in assigning the restraining order is grounded in her reading of the Illinois Department of Public Health Act and other statutes.

Specifically, Grischow argued that Pritzker's executive orders overstepped his authority and the IDPH did not delegate its authority correctly because it authorized school districts, not local health departments, to enforce masking, testing and vaccination rules.

The attorney general called the opinion a misreading of the law and said the governor said the restraining order is sowing confusion and discord in schools.

But Shoked also said he's more inclined to agree with Pritzker's interpretation of the situation.

Grischow argued the pandemic has gone on long enough for the legislature to enact rules to contain it. Shoked said he could understand the governor's argument that the evolving pandemic necessitated the series of executive orders that have defined Illinois' response to the virus.

"Yes, it's true that we've had a pandemic for two years now," he said. "But it's also true that our knowledge about it, and about what are the next mitigation measures, keeps changing."

Shoked said the governor's odds of success would improve on appeal. He observed that the higher up you get in the Illinois legal system, the likelier the outcome is to favor the state.

“Both in Illinois and other states ... the government tends to win,” he said. “As you go higher ... It’s still not a slam dunk, but it still means that probably likelier than not that they win, but not by much.”

Daily Herald

South Elgin tops Jacobs for regional title --- 2/17/2022

By Craig Brueske



South Elgin players celebrate their victory over Jacobs in Thursday's girls' regional final game at Larkin High School in Elgin. *Paul Valade | Staff Photographer*

Relying on a fast start and displaying a balanced attack, **South Elgin's** girls' basketball team posted a 61-48 victory over Jacobs in the Larkin Class 4A regional championship Thursday night in Elgin.

Senior guards Caroline Croft and Ella Winterhalder scored 17 points apiece for the Storm (25-5), who advance to Tuesday's DeKalb sectional semifinals against Rockton Hononegah.

"My teammates had faith in me," said Croft, who scored 12 of her points in the fourth quarter as the Storm held off a late comeback bid from the Golden Eagles (15-18). "They put the ball in my hands toward the end and helped seal the game."

Croft, who added 7 assists, 5 rebounds and 3 steals, was a freshman on South Elgin's last regional championship team in 2019.

"It's a great feeling to get to do it again," she said. "I'm very grateful. Most people don't get to do it twice in a career. This one is special. It's my senior year -- and after not getting the chance last year.

"It's definitely worth the wait."

South Elgin jumped out to a 22-13 first-quarter lead, as Winterhalder and Chloe Kmiec (7 points) each knocked down a pair of 3-pointers.

Clinging to a 9-7 lead, the Storm used an 8-0 run to create some distance, as Kmiec and Winterhalder connected on 3-point baskets and junior guard Raina Yang (10 points, 5 assists, 3 steals) added a steal and layup to make it 17-7.

"We won earlier in the year against them (54-34 on Nov. 17), but I told them, 'they're going to be out for revenge,'" said Storm coach Dan Mandernack. "Like the other teams that we played twice, you have to come out with a sense of urgency. Throw that first punch and show them that we're here."

South Elgin, which led 34-21 at halftime, extended its margin to as many as 17 points on 2 occasions -- the last at 44-27 with 2:49 left in the third quarter.

Back-to-back buckets from Arianna Corrado (14 points) and Janae Gillus helped pull the Golden Eagles within 44-31 after 3 quarters.

Despite a game-high 17 points, 15 rebounds and 4 steals from senior Mackenzie Leahy, Jacobs would get no closer than 10 points the rest of the way.

"They've (Storm) got enough weapons so that if you cover one, they have a couple more who can hit you," said Jacobs coach Jon Reibel. "It wasn't the best way to start off, but the girls did a great job of fighting back and challenging.

"It was their continued fight -- that's what I was most proud of."

Junior Zoie Lewis celebrated her birthday with a double-double -- 10 points, 11 rebounds and 5 steals for the Storm.

"It has been a crazy year," said Mandernack. "We've had COVID, plantar fasciitis, an eye infection -- at one point, we hadn't all been together for a month and a half."

South Elgin now awaits Rockton Hononegah, a team it defeated 50-46 back in November.

"Hononegah is a lot like us -- they're small, they press, and they shoot a ton of 3s," said the coach. "We had one heck of a game against them the first time. We'll be ready."

Chicago Tribune/The Courier-News

‘She’s priceless’: Dallas recruit Caroline Croft comes through with 12 points in fourth quarter as South Elgin stops Jacobs in regional final ---2/17/2022

By Paul Johnson for the Aurora Beacon-News



South Elgin's Caroline Croft (11) puts up a shot in the first quarter against Jacobs during the Class 4A Larkin Regional championship game in Elgin on Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022. (Brian O'Mahoney / The Beacon-News)

South Elgin's Caroline Croft was sitting at five points entering the fourth quarter.

That tidbit was not enough to keep Croft down.

“My teammates had faith in me,” said Croft, an NCAA Division III Dallas recruit. “They let me get the ball, put it in my hands at the end, and I think that really helped seal the game.”

A crafty Croft definitely sealed the deal Thursday night.

The 5-foot-5 senior guard scored 12 of her 17 points in the fourth as the Storm pulled away for a 61-48 victory over Jacobs in the Class 4A Larkin Regional championship game.



South Elgin's Zoie Lewis (24) battles for a rebound in the fourth quarter against Jacobs during the Class 4A Larkin Regional championship game in Elgin on Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022. (Brian O'Mahoney / The Beacon-News)

South Elgin (26-5) advances to play Rockton Hononegah (30-3) at 6 p.m. Tuesday in the DeKalb Sectional semifinals.

For Storm coach Dan Mandernack, it was appropriate that Croft took over at the end. The four-year varsity player recently scored her 1,000th career point.

“Caroline, four straight years, blood, sweat and tears, man,” Mandernack said. “She’s priceless. Words can’t describe how much Caroline means to our team.”

The Storm came out on fire from 3-point range Thursday night, taking an early lead and setting the tone.

Chloe Kmiec, Ella Winterhalder and Raina Yang hit consecutive threes in the first quarter as South Elgin built a 17-7 lead. The Storm then took a 34-21 halftime lead.

“We had to come out with a sense of urgency,” Mandernack said. “Throw that first punch, show them that we’re here.”

As a result, South Elgin put Jacobs (15-18) behind from the start. The Golden Eagles never got closer than 10 points after the first quarter.



Jacobs' Mackenzie Leahy (10) dribbles in the first quarter against South Elgin during the Class 4A Larkin Regional championship game in Elgin on Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022. (Brian O'Mahoney / The Beacon-News)

“Not the best way to start off, putting us in that position,” Jacobs coach Jonny Reibel said. “The girls did a great job of fighting back, making it a game and challenging, and that’s what they kept doing. That’s what we’re most proud of.”

Mackenzie Leahy led Jacobs with 17 points and 15 rebounds. Arianna Corrado added 14 points.

Croft and Winterhalder paced South Elgin with 17 points apiece. Yang scored 10 points, while Zoie Lewis contributed 10 points and 10 rebounds.

The Storm also continue to set a new program record for wins with every victory.

Following an unbeaten run to the Upstate Eight Conference title, they also added to the program's hardware with a fourth regional title.

"Expectations were really high for us to pull this off," Mandernack said. "We're going to enjoy this until tomorrow and then get going on Hononegah."



South Elgin's Ella Winterhalder (10) and Jacobs' Elizabeth Tamburrino (5) fight for a loose ball in the fourth quarter during the Class 4A Larkin Regional championship game in Elgin on Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022. (Brian O'Mahoney / The Beacon-News)

South Elgin beat Rockton Hononegah 50-46 in its second game of the season.

"They are a lot like us," Mandernack said. "They're small. They press. They shoot a ton of threes. We had one heck of a game against them in the beginning of the year."

Croft and Winterhalder were a part of South Elgin's last regional championship team as freshmen. A first-round exit followed as sophomores, and the Illinois High School Association canceled the state tournament last season.

Add that all up, and it's easy to see why Croft was pretty happy afterward.

"It's a great feeling to be able to do it again," she said. "I'm just very grateful to be able to do it. Most people don't get to do it twice in a career, and I'm very grateful to be able to do it again."

"This was special — our senior year after not getting one last year. It's pretty special and definitely worth the wait."