

Sports

Broncos post dominant homecoming win to move to 7-0

Montini takes a 42-0 halftime lead and rolls to a 49-3 victory over Saint Viator

The Montini Catholic football team continued its undefeated season by winning its homecoming game on Friday night in Lombard. Playing in front of a large and spirited crowd, the Broncos lifted their 2025 record to 7-0 with Friday's 49-3 thrashing of Saint Viator. Montini led the visiting Lions 28-0 after one quarter and 42-0 at halftime.

Junior quarterback Israel Abrams of the Broncos completed 15 of 19 pass attempts for 232 yards and three touchdowns. Abrams also contributed a 3-yard touchdown run during the first quarter.

Montini scored its sixth touchdown of the game in the final minute of the first half, when Abrams connected with junior Damacio Ortegon on a 27-yard touchdown pass. Junior Johnny Louise added the extra-point kick to give the Broncos a 42-0 lead.

Montini and the Lions played the entire second half of Friday's game with a running clock.

Junior Luca Florio scored the Broncos' first touchdown of the game on a 10-yard reception from Abrams in the first quarter.

Montini senior Payton Nelson delivered his second "pick six" of the season when

he intercepted a Saint Viator pass and rumbled 30 yards for a touchdown during the first quarter. Louise added the extra-point kick after Nelson's touchdown to give the Broncos a 21-0 lead.

Junior Ben Evenson of the Broncos made a team-leading eight tackles during Friday's win. Louise provided six tackles.

The 3-yard touchdown run by Abrams, and the ensuing extra-point kick by Louise, extended Montini's lead to 28-0 in the first quarter.

Montini junior Nico Castaldo hauled in a 76-yard touchdown pass from Abrams during the second quarter. Castaldo, who caught a long pass from Abrams near the Lions' 30-yard line and coasted into the end zone on his touchdown catch, made four receptions for 101 yards during Friday's victory.

Saint Viator, which dropped to 1-6 with Friday's loss, scored its only points of the evening on a 39-yard field goal with a little more than seven minutes to play in the fourth quarter.

Senior Charles Flowers, who ran 11 yards for a touchdown in the first half, scored the Broncos' only touchdown of the second half on a 28-

yard run with about three minutes left in the game. Louise then added his seventh extra-point kick to close out the scoring.

"We had a difficult week in practice, as we were pretty banged up," said Montini coach Mike Bukovsky after Friday's win. One week before beating Saint Viator, the Broncos earned a thrilling 55-54 Chicago Catholic League (CCL) White Division win over Carmel in Mundelein.

"I was very pleased with the way our defense responded after last week's game against Carmel," added Bukovsky. "We really need to get back on the right track and play defense the way we are capable of playing. Offensively we came right out and dictated the game, scoring early and often, and got a chance to rest some guys in the second half."

Friday's homecoming game against Saint Viator was Montini's final home contest of its regular season. The Broncos will try to improve to 8-0 this Friday, when they will travel to Chicago to face Saint Ignatius (2-5). Montini will complete its regular season with a CCL White Division game at Saint Laurence on Oct. 24.



The Montini Catholic football team won its homecoming game on Friday night defeating Saint Viator 49-3 in Lombard. The Broncos improved their overall season record to 7-0 with their top-sided victory. Saint Viator dropped to 1-6. Montini led the visiting Lions 28-0 after one quarter and 42-0 at halftime. Junior quarterback Israel Abrams (No. 7) threw three touchdown passes and ran for a touchdown during the first half. Friday's contest marked the Broncos' final home game of the regular season. Montini will conclude its regular season with this Friday's battle at Saint Ignatius, followed by a Chicago Catholic League (CCL) White Division game at Saint Laurence on Oct. 24.

JIM IZZO PHOTO Rock Valley Publish

Broncos beat the Warriors

The Montini Catholic and Willowbrook girls volleyball teams squared off in last week's match in Villa Park. The visiting Broncos edged the Warriors in a three-game battle. Montini won the opening game of the Oct. 7 contest. Willowbrook won the second game, and Montini prevailed in the third game to post a 25-21, 22-25, 25-16 victory. Freshman Victoria Reed (pictured far right) hit a team-leading 12 kills for the

Broncos. Senior Francesca Lorenzo bashed 11 kills for Montini, while junior Moira Quirk contributed nine kills. Junior Avalyn DeKeyser handed out 38 assists for the Broncos in their three-game victory. Montini sophomore Hope Garland made 25 digs. Willowbrook senior Kendall Norton distributed 16 assists and made eight digs in the three-game battle. Melanie Marinier provided 14 assists and seven digs for the Warriors. Junior Tess Doyle (No. 6, pictured right) made 28 digs for Willowbrook. Freshman Evelyn Lammers supplied seven kills for the Warriors. Seniors Julia Amin and Joely Maciejewski contributed six kills each for Willowbrook. Junior Maggie Hurley hit five kills, while freshman Darcy Hurley connected for four kills. Two days after beating Willowbrook, Montini defeated Fenwick 25-19, 25-14 in Lombard. The Broncos raised their overall season record to 13-10 with their home win over the Friars. Sophomore Micaela Haggerty pounded nine kills for Montini in its Oct. 9 win over Fenwick. Lorenzo hit seven kills, while Reed provided six kills. Garland made 12 digs. Willowbrook won four of five matches and claimed the championship plaque at Saturday's Elk Grove Invite. The Warriors' overall season record stood at 17-11 at the end of Saturday's action.



CHRIS FOX PHOTOS Rock Valley Publish

Warriors roll to third straight win

Willowbrook pounds Proviso West 50-8 to improve to 4-3 overall

The Willowbrook football team improved to 4-3 overall with Friday's dominant 50-8 win over Proviso West in Villa Park.

Playing in their final home game of the regular season, the Warriors built a 23-0 halftime lead over the visiting Panthers, who dropped to 1-6 with the loss. Willowbrook piled on four second-half touchdowns to coast to its third straight victory.

After beating Proviso West (a member of the West Suburban Silver Conference) in Friday's crossover game, the Warriors will resume their West Suburban Gold Conference schedule with this Friday's contest at Proviso East (1-6 overall and 0-5 in conference play). Willowbrook will enter the game with a conference mark of 3-1. The Warriors will complete their regular season with an Oct. 24 conference battle at District 88 rival Addison Trail. The Blazers moved to 6-1 overall and 5-0 in the conference with Friday's 45-16 home win over Proviso East.

Willowbrook scored its first touchdown against Proviso West on a 13-yard pass from senior quarterback Jahonise Reed to senior Jaylen Griffin with about five minutes left in the first quarter. Junior Ben Swanson added the extra-point kick to give the Warriors a 7-0 lead.

A poor punt by the Panthers after their next offensive drive gave Willowbrook the ball with possession at Proviso West's 13-yard line.

The Warriors scored on the first play of their offensive series, with senior Anthony Leo carrying the ball into the end zone on a 13-yard run with about two minutes remaining in the first quarter. Swanson's extra-point kick pushed Willowbrook's lead to 14-0.

In the closing seconds of the first quarter, senior Rashad Morrison of the Warriors sacked Proviso West's quarterback in the end zone for a safety that extended the lead to 16-0. A 4-yard touchdown run by Leo, and the ensuing extra-point kick from Swanson, raised the lead to 23-0 with about 11 minutes to play in the second quarter.

Leo delivered his third touchdown of the evening with a 3-yard run across the goal line with about eight minutes left in the third quarter. Swanson added the extra-point kick to give the Warriors a 30-0 lead.

Reed threw a 49-yard touchdown pass to Griffin later in the third quarter.

Swanson's extra-point kick moved the lead to 37-0 with 4:40 remaining in the quarter. Reed connected with junior JJ Muilli on a 53-yard touchdown pass with 1:49 left in the third quarter.

The extra-point kick pushed the lead to 44-0. The two teams played the rest of the game with a running clock.

Proviso West scored its only touchdown of the night on a 7-yard run with about eight minutes to play. The Panthers added a two-point run. Proviso West's offense had the ball deep in Willowbrook territory in the game's closing minute, but senior Asher Carson of the Warriors intercepted a pass

near his team's goal line and raced 99 yards for a touchdown to close out the scoring. Willowbrook tried and failed to convert a running play after Carson's touchdown.



Willowbrook's football team earned its third straight win on Friday, beating Proviso West 50-8 in Villa Park. The Warriors raised their overall season record to 4-3 with the victory. Proviso West dropped to 1-6. Three first-half touchdowns and a safety propelled Willowbrook to a 23-0 halftime lead. Senior Jaylen Griffin (No. 0) scored the Warriors' first touchdown of the evening on a 13-yard reception from senior quarterback Jahonise Reed. Senior Anthony Leo (No. 2) scored the Warriors' next three touchdowns. After delivering a 13-yard touchdown run in the first quarter, Leo produced a 4-yard scoring run in the second quarter and a 3-yard touchdown burst in the third quarter. Willowbrook will close its regular season with a pair of West Suburban Gold Conference road games. The Warriors will face Proviso East this Friday in Maywood. Willowbrook will end its regular season with a conference battle at Addison Trail on Oct. 24.



CHRIS FOX PHOTOS/Rock Valley Publishing

Warriors capture regional title

Willowbrook High School's flag football team won an IHSA regional title on its home field last week. The Warriors defeated St. Edward 37-12 in the championship game of the Willowbrook Regional on Oct. 8. With the win, the Warriors raised their 2025 season record to 19-0 and advanced to this week's South Elgin Sectional. Willowbrook needed to win two games in South Elgin earlier this week to advance to the IHSA state quarterfinals in Villa Park. The four state quarterfinal games will take place this Friday at Willowbrook. The semifinals, third-place game and state championship contest will be played at Willowbrook this Saturday. The Warriors held a 16-0 lead over St. Edward after one quarter of the regional championship game. Willowbrook extended its lead to 30-0 by halftime. Junior McKenzie Edison (No. 3) scored the Warriors' first touchdown of the game when she caught a tipped pass from senior quarterback Mari Smrz and raced into the end zone for a 48-yard touchdown reception. Junior Mia Grochowski caught a two-point conversion pass from Smrz to give Willowbrook an 8-0 lead. Junior Janell Adams scored the Warriors' next touchdown on a 75-yard run in the first quarter. Edison caught a two-point pass from Smrz to raise the lead to 16-0. Smrz and Edison connected

on a short touchdown reception, and an ensuing two-point conversion pass, to push Willowbrook's lead to 24-0 in the second quarter. Smrz threw a 6-yard touchdown pass to junior Jada Langston later in the quarter to move the lead to 30-0. St. Edward scored in the closing seconds of the first half to cut Willowbrook's lead to 30-6 by halftime. Adams scored the Warriors' fifth and final touchdown of the game on a running play in the third quarter. Junior Liz Pettinger added a one-point conversion run to push the lead to 37-6. St. Edward scored the game's final touchdown with a few seconds to play.



Answers

PUZZLE 1

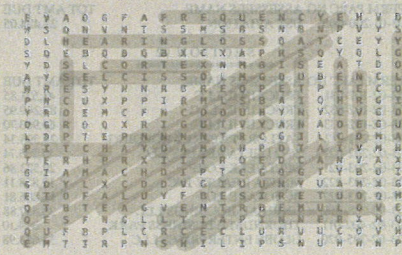
5	3	4	2	1	7	9	6	8
9	8	2	4	6	3	7	1	5
7	1	6	8	5	9	2	3	4
4	7	3	1	8	2	5	9	6
2	6	5	3	9	4	1	8	7
1	9	8	5	7	6	4	2	3
3	2	9	7	4	8	6	5	1
6	5	7	9	3	1	8	4	2
8	4	1	6	2	5	3	7	9

PUZZLE 2

3	8	9	5	7	4	2	6	1
4	1	7	2	6	8	9	3	5
2	5	6	3	9	1	8	4	7
6	3	8	7	1	2	4	5	9
9	4	2	6	3	5	7	1	8
5	7	1	8	4	9	6	2	3
1	2	4	9	8	3	5	7	6
7	9	3	4	5	6	1	8	2
8	6	5	1	2	7	3	9	4

CROSSWORD

W	H	S	I	N	S	T	O	D	G	E				
R	O	T	W	I	T	H	S	T	A	N	D	I	N	G
A	L	I	D	E	O	L	O	G	U	E	A	H		
B	E	M	E	R	E	D	O	M	A					
S	E	S	I	E	P	A	R	E	D	I	E	D		
D	A	A	I	N	D	A	S	A	L	E				
M	I	L	L	E	D	A	I	S	E	S				
O	D	A	D	R	A	I	O							
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T	H	A	N	O	R	H	O	S	H					
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Police Reports

The Villa Park Police Department recently reported the following arrests and citations. Readers are reminded that an arrest does not constitute a conviction, and that suspects are considered innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law. Persons charged with domestic battery are not named in order to protect the privacy of victims. Juveniles age 17 or younger are not named.

Oct. 7
Theft was reported at a laundromat in the 1-100 block of S. Villa at 3:19 p.m. A complainant reported that an unknown subject(s) removed clothing from a washing machine and left with the clothing.

Disorderly conduct was reported in the 200 block of S. Villa at 2:22 p.m. A complainant reported being threatened by a subject. The subject was issued a citation.

Oct. 5
Trespassing was reported at a store in the 1-100 block of E. St. Charles at 2:18 p.m. A complainant reported that a subject who had previously been issued a trespass warning was back on the property. The subject was issued a citation.

Trespassing was reported at a residence in the 300 block of N. Cornell at 7:21 p.m. A

complainant reported that a subject opened their door and entered their home without permission.

Oct. 4
Theft of a motor vehicle was reported in the 300 block of N. Ardmore at 11:12 a.m. A complainant reported their vehicle had been stolen. The vehicle was later located by police in another jurisdiction.

Retail theft was reported at a store in the 900 block of S. Route 83 at 2:33 p.m. A complainant reported that a subject removed merchandise from display shelves and left without paying.

Oct. 3
Theft was reported at a motel in the 1-100 block of W. Roosevelt at 3:40 p.m. An unknown subject reportedly took a complainant's phone during a conversation.

Domestic battery was reported in the 600 block of S. Cornell at 7:11 p.m. A complainant reported that a subject battered them.

Oct. 2
A complainant in the 400 block of N. Ardmore reported at 9:24 a.m. that their vehicle had been egged.

A complainant in the 200 block of E. Vermont reported at 3:05 p.m. that a subject was causing a disturbance. The subject was issued a trespass

warning.

A complainant in the 600 block of N. Michigan reported that they were contacted and informed they had won a contest they did not enter. The complainant found the incident to be suspicious.

Oct. 1
A Villa Park man was charged with two counts of domestic battery in the 1-100 block of W. Adams at 11:49 a.m. The subject was transported to the DuPage County Jail.

Angel Lechuga-Ortiz, 26, of Maywood, was charged with retail theft—under ringing/not exceeding \$300—at an auto parts store in the 200 block of E. North at 2:47 p.m.

Aaron Gualpa, 24, of Villa Park, was charged with two counts of DUI-drugs and two counts of possession of a controlled substance on the above date for an incident that allegedly occurred on Aug. 22, 2023.

A complainant at a store in the 300 block of E. St. Charles reported at 7:52 p.m. that subjects kept entering the store and causing a disturbance. The subjects were issued trespass warnings.

Identity theft, fraud

Three incidents of identity theft and one incident of fraud were reported in the village between Oct. 1-7.

Court grants state's motion to detain pre-trial Cook County man accused of leading police on high-speed chase

Subject reportedly fled from a Villa Park officer attempting to make a traffic stop; police eventually apprehend subject near I-290 and Mannheim Road



Jeremy Miller

DuPage County State's Attorney Robert Berlin and Villa Park Chief of Police Todd Kubish announced last week that Judge Joshua Dieffen granted the state's motion to deny pre-trial release for a Cook County man accused of leading police on a high-speed chase.

Jeremy Miller, 44, of Bellwood, appeared in court on Oct. 9, and was charged with two counts of aggravated fleeing and eluding (Class 4 felony) and one count of driving while license suspended—fourth to ninth offense (Class 4 felony).

On Wednesday, Oct. 8, at approximately 8:57 p.m., a Villa Park police officer on routine patrol allegedly observed a 2005 Toyota Camry with suspended license plates near the intersection of St. Charles Road and Addison Road. The officer activated her emergency lights to conduct a traffic stop on the Camry. It is alleged that the Camry, later determined to be driven by Miller, turned onto Bierman Avenue and initially slowed down, but instead of stopping, sped away from the officer and drove through a stop sign at Bierman Avenue and Holly Court.

It is further alleged that Miller ultimately made his way to eastbound St. Charles Road and reached speeds of approximately 79 mph in a 30-mph zone. It is alleged that Miller proceeded onto northbound Route

83, where he reached speeds of approximately 86 mph. It is further alleged that Miller drove to North Avenue, and at the intersection of North Avenue and York Street, he drove into the opposite lane of travel to go around traffic and drove through a red light.

Miller allegedly continued driving onto I-290, where he was weaving in and out of traffic until officers successfully spike-stripped his vehicle, causing him to stop on the exit ramp at I-290 and Mannheim Road. It is alleged that after stopping, Miller exited the vehicle and fled on foot. He was taken into custody following a brief foot pursuit.

"It is alleged that in an utter display of contempt for the rule of law and complete disregard for public safety, Mr. Miller ignored multiple stop signs and traffic control devices, drove into oncoming lanes of traffic and led police on a dangerous high-speed chase," Berlin said. "The successful apprehension of the defendant in this case once again sends a loud and clear message that in DuPage County, we do not tolerate any behavior that endangers public safety. I thank the Villa Park Police Department for their efforts

on this case and their ongoing work in ensuring safe travel for motorists, as well as the Elmhurst, Oak Brook, and Berkeley police departments for their assistance. I also thank Assistant State's Attorneys Sean Kinsella and Jennifer Nielsen for their work in securing charges against Mr. Miller."

"Mr. Miller is yet another example of someone driving dangerously despite having lost the legal right to do so," Kubish said. "His alleged reckless actions put our officers and the public at serious risk, showing complete disregard for public safety. My officers will continue to use every tool at their disposal to safely and efficiently apprehend individuals like this and remove offenders from our roadways. If you break the law in our jurisdiction, we will arrest you—it's what our community demands. I commend my officers for their professional and outstanding work and thank our neighboring Elmhurst, Oak Brook, and Berkeley police departments for their invaluable assistance in apprehending this offender. Finally, I express my deep gratitude for our strong partnership with the DuPage County State's Attorney's Office, led by Bob Berlin, for their hardline stance against criminals."

Miller's next court appearance is scheduled for Nov. 3, in front of Judge Ann Celine O'Hallaren Walsh.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Once a Warrior, always a Warrior

The Willowbrook girls volleyball program held its inaugural Hall of Champions event last month. Inductees into the Hall of Champions included alumni who reached major statistical milestones (1,000 or more in any category) as Warriors. This year's honorees are: Payton Ceh (Class of 2020; 1,000 digs), Calli Kenny (Class of 2024; 1,000 kills), Hannah Kenny (Class of 2025; 1,000 kills and 1,500 assists), Katie Linnig (Class of 2022; 1,000 assists), Sarah McCarthy (Class of 2010; 1,000 assists), and the Warriors' 2023 team, which won the third-place trophy in that year's IHSA Class 4A state tournament. During the Hall of Champions ceremony, the inductees in attendance were recognized before the team's Sept. 25 home match against Hinsdale Central. Each honoree was presented with a personalized banner, which will be displayed annually in the school's main gym throughout each girls volleyball season. Pictured left to right are: former varsity head coach Sue Bower, Ceh, Katelyn McCann (a 2019 Willowbrook graduate who is now one of the program's freshmen-level coaches), McCarthy, and current varsity head coach Irene Mason.

Villa Park Women's Club to hold its Trick Or Trot 5K Run/Walk on Oct. 25

The 5K race will begin at 9 a.m.; Little Devil 1K Dash starts at 9:45 a.m.; all participants are encouraged to wear their Halloween costumes

The Villa Park Women's Club will hold its annual Trick Or Trot 5K Run/Walk and Little Devil 1K Dash on Saturday, Oct. 25. The start line for both events is on the Illinois Prairie Path, near the Rugarud Gazebo. The gazebo is located near the intersection of Ardmore Avenue and Park Boulevard.

All participants are encouraged to wear their Halloween costumes.

The 5-kilometer (3.1-mile) run/walk will begin at 9 a.m. The 1-kilometer dash (for

kids 12 and under) will start at 9:45 a.m.

To pre-register for the run/walk or the dash for kids, visit the Villa Park Women's Club's website at villapark-womensclub.com.

The pre-race registration cost for the 5-kilometer run/walk is \$35 per person. Day of race registration for the run/walk is \$40 per person. The pre-race registration cost for the 1-kilometer dash is \$15 for the family's first child and \$10 for each child after the first child.

The Villa Park Women's Club is a service and social club focused on the safety, morale and welfare of the village and its residents. The club's mission is to make a difference in the lives of those who live, work and play in the community.

The Trick Or Trot/Little Devil Dash is one of the club's main fundraising events. All proceeds from the Oct. 25 event will benefit the charities, organizations and families supported by the Villa Park Women's Club.

Suburban Life

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

MARLI SMRZ

Willowbrook, senior, flag football

Smrz threw for three touchdowns in the regional final and sectional semifinal wins, and threw for six touchdowns and had an interception defensively as unbeaten Willowbrook beat West Aurora 44-0 in the sectional final to advance to state.



She was voted the Athlete of the Week in an online vote. Here is her Q&A with Sports Editor Joshua Welge.

Your team is undefeated on the season. What makes your team so good?

Smrz: Being undefeated isn't new for us, but what was special about this year is the connection we have on the field. We all have similar values and similar goals so we play for each other more than ourselves!

How has flag football changed since you started with it?

Smrz: Flag football has grown tremendously, but fall the first ever Illinois club team started. Hands Team Academy, and I was lucky enough to make the team and travel around and play in highly competitive tournaments!

Is there any sport you have not played that you think you'd be good at?

Smrz: I have always wished I would play hockey! I've played basketball, volleyball, softball, soccer, and then flag football. So it's a little combination of all of them!

What is a place in the world you have never been to but would like to visit?

Smrz: I would love to visit Italy! It's kinda basic, but I think it's a beautiful country!

What is a TV show you never get tired of watching?

Smrz: Right now my favorite show is *Suits*. I love how it gets the message of determination and confidence across.

What concert would you love to go see?

Smrz: I would choose to go see Ty Meleys with my best friend!

What are your post-high school plans?

Smrz: Athletically I am looking for the perfect school to play flag, and academically I plan to major in either criminal justice or political science, with a minor in psych. I hope to be a criminal defense lawyer some day!



Great assist for Steve (last) West. Willowbrook's Marli Smrz runs the ball against West Aurora at the Sectional final on Tuesday, Oct. 14, in South Elgin.

HIGH SCHOOL GOLF

Downers Grove South's Miah Wanserski takes 2nd at Class 2A state tournament

By JOSHUA WELGE
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Miah Wanserski put in 30 to 45 minutes of extra time on the putting green after dinner Oct. 10 in anticipation of the final round of the Class 2A state tournament.

It paid off.

The Downers Grove South senior finished tied for second, five shots back of champion Alti Wenzel of Oswego on top, at the Class 2A state tournament that concluded Oct. 11 at Hickory Point in Forsyth.

Wanserski finished 3-under par with a two-day score of 141 to the Glenbrook North's Martha Kuwahara.

"I locked in, focused on those birdie-able putts so that when the time came, I would be confident making them," Wanserski said. "I'm proud of the way that I finished. I played the best that I could."

Wanserski entered Saturday's final round tied for fourth with an even-par 72 shot on Friday. With birdies on four of her first seven holes, Wanserski shot a 3-under-par 69 on Saturday.

"I was making a bunch of putts. My putter was on fire on the front," Wanserski said. "That really allowed me to go pretty low on the front. I had a bad back nine on the first day that cost me some strokes and put me in fourth. What can you do?"

Wanserski, who committed in September to play Division I golf at The University of Texas-San Antonio, has done quite a bit in a short time.

She used to play golf on the side for fun while softball was her main sport, but decided after freshman year that golf was her passion that she wanted to pursue at the next level. She started playing full-time competitive golf two years ago.

"I think now I did at state really just shows that I'm not even near my full potential, that I have so much more to give to the game," Wanserski said. "I was playing with girls who have probably played since birth and I haven't played as long. It makes me confident with the progress that I have made in the last year or two."

Lanmont freshman Sarah Scott finished sixth at 1-over par, shooting 2-under on Saturday. Benet freshman Lauren Gauss was ninth at 3-over. Hinsdale Central's team shot a 644 for



Photo provided by Bonnie Karpovich. Downers Grove South senior Miah Wanserski follows the flight of her ball during the Class 2A state tournament in Forsyth.

sixth place and Benet was seventh with 646.

Class 3A boys state tournament

York, with a two-day team score of 607, finished third at the Class 3A state tournament at The Den at Fox Creek Golf Course. New Trier and Evanston each shot a 589.

Hinsdale Central (619) was sixth. Jopshi and Benet senior Caden Peterson finished tied for fifth with a two-day score of 144 for even par. Evanston's Lester Low, at 7-under, was the individual champion. York's Sal Puripora was at 4-over 148 to the for 13th.

Class 2A boys state tournament

Wheaton Academy shot a two-day score of 604 for third place at the Class 2A state tournament at Illinois State's Webring Golf Course.

Normal U-High and Washington each shot 596. Wheaton Academy, which led by three shots after Friday's first round, finished eight shots back.

Wheaton Academy junior Owen Conlarts, who was tied for the lead after the first round, finished fifth at even par, a two-day score of 142. Dunlap's Nolan Ecoles finished at 5-under to win the individual championship. Wheaton Academy freshman Nick Kadini finished tied for seventh at 5-over par 147.

Class 1A boys state tournament

Timothy Christian shot a two-day score of 646 for fifth place at the Class 1A state tournament at Prairie Vista. Tenholls (623) was the team champion.

Timothy Christian's Miles Van Prooyen shot a 5-over par to tie for sixth with a two-day score of 149.

Willowbrook, with Marli Smrz throwing 6 TDs, romps past W. Aurora

Unbeaten Warriors returning to state

By JOSHUA WEIGER
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Marli Smrz's memory of her introduction to flag football sounded like any freshman trying a new activity in high school.

"I was just trying to make some new friends," said Smrz, now a Willowbrook senior. "I didn't expect anything. This has been like a dream."

What's her expectation now?

"Win state," Smrz said without hesitation.

My, how things have evolved in four years for Smrz and the Warriors, who are playing every bit like a potential state champion.

Willowbrook looked the part on Tuesday. Smrz tossed six touchdown passes to four different receivers and had the first of her team's two interceptions.

Elizabeth Pettinger, twice at the receiving end of Smrz's aerial excellence with TDs, later added an interception return for a touchdown to trigger a running clock.

Unbeaten Willowbrook, a state quarterfinalist last season, is headed home field after an emphatic 44-0 win over West Aurora in the South Elgin Sectional final.

Willowbrook (21-0) will play Kenwood in a 7:30 p.m. quarterfinal Friday.

"This is like a dream come true," Smrz said. "All I wanted all four years is to be going to state. We're the only team that has done it now every year, and to be a part of it now is huge. And we're not even close to being done."

Smrz tossed TD passes of 16 and 7 yards to Jada Langston, 7 and 5 yards to Petteinger, and 10 yards to McKenzie Edison on the final play of the first half for an 18-0 halftime lead.

Smrz's last throw, a touchdown, of course, to Lily Macleas for the game's final score.

The Warriors' offense is hard to stop with Smrz spraying passes all over the field to multiple receivers and speedster Janel Adams taking handoffs.

"This is Year 3 together, working alongside each other," Smrz said.



Willowbrook celebrates the win over West Aurora at the Sectional final on Tuesday, Oct. 14, in South Elgin.

Karen West for Shaw Local News Network

"Partly mornings, stay late, training outside of practice. I really feel like a family. Those are my girls, for sure."

Smrz, sporting a bright pink headband Tuesday, is the maestro who makes it flow.

Willowbrook coach Rachel Karros, who also knew Smrz from softball and coached her in volleyball, noted that Smrz played cornerback her freshman year of flag football.

Smrz was struck at quarterback as a sophomore one, and she hasn't looked back.

"We asked her to play quarterback her sophomore year after she hadn't played it. We were like, 'Hey, you play softball,'" Karros said. "As Marli builds her confidence she can be scary good. She has played every different style of flag there is, and this is the fastest the game is now. Super proud of her."

For all her passing prowess, Smrz's most significant play Tuesday was

picking off someone else's pass. West Aurora (21-3) took the game's first possession and drove down the field, sophomore quarterback Sarah Cartos spreading the wealth chunk by chunk to the Willowbrook 12-yard line.

But Smrz stepped in front of a Cartos pass for an interception. It eventually turned into Smrz's first TD to Langston, halfway through the first quarter.

Willowbrook, after grabbing the momentum, never gave it back.

"That's my thing is red-zone interceptions," Smrz said. "Needed momentum the other way, trying to limit the score. Zero is the best."

Willowbrook's pretty good at putting up zeroes — Tuesday being its 12th shutout of the season.

"Last year, we split with them. We know they're good, well-coached, disciplined. What we learned from last year is this game can break your

heart," Karros said. "Our goal going forward is no snaps off, have an answer for everything."

West Aurora, which lost to Willowbrook in the sectional final for the second straight year, didn't have an answer for the Warriors.

And, perhaps, it wasn't at its peak. West Aurora coach Jordyn McFarlane noted that Cartos was banged up, which affected her agility in the pocket. And then the Blackhawks had two starters go out with injury, one on Willowbrook's first score.

"Just a bad chain of events," McFarlane said. "This would have been a very different game. We had five injuries that game, two injuries from last game, our quarterback was banged up, she is usually really agile in the pocket, and we had two starters go out, another one go out with a finger. We ended up with 10 healthy girls."

"Score may not reflect it, but we came out with heart."