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VOL. 22 • No. 37

WWW.VILLAPARKREVIEW.COM

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2026

An electric atmosphere at Willowbrook's 2026 season opener



Willowbrook High School's football team opened its 2026 season with Friday's home game against the Glenbard East Rams. The Warriors led the visiting Rams 13-6 with about five minutes left in the fourth quarter when flashes of lightning caused a 50-minute delay. After play resumed, Glenbard East scored a touchdown and added the extra-point kick in the final minute of the fourth quarter to force an overtime period. The lightning had cleared the area, but there was still electricity in the air in Villa Park when Willowbrook went on to beat the Rams 20-13 in the contest, which ended at 11:16 p.m. Several Warriors are pictured while running to celebrate with their fellow students after the victory, which marked Willowbrook's first Week 1 win since 2018. (Photo by Chris Fox)

INSIDE:

Opinion	4	Sports	10-11
Speak out.....	5	Worship guide	12
Out & About	6	Puzzles	13
Police reports	8	Classifieds	14-15

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Sports

Broncos kick off season with dominant win over Hoopeston

Montini scores five first-half TDs, coasts to 48-0 victory

The Montini Catholic football team opened its 2026 season with Friday's 48-0 victory over Hoopeston Area High School. The Broncos, who are seeking their third straight IHSA state championship, scored three first-quarter touchdowns and added two more touchdowns in the second quarter to take a 35-0 halftime lead.

Montini senior quarterback Israel Abrams completed nine of 15 pass attempts for 192 yards and three touchdowns during the first half before heading to the sideline for the second half. Senior Eddie Kowalczyk of the Broncos provided a 31-yard touchdown run and a 14-yard touchdown reception.

Sophomore Eadon Reed, sophomore Patrick Gabriel, junior Frankie Carbonara, senior Damacio Oregon and senior Daniel Sago scored one touchdown each for Montini. Senior kicker Johnny Louise made six of seven extra-point attempts. Senior Joey Neustadt made four receptions for 102 yards.

Montini's defense shut out Hoopeston after holding the Cornjerkers to less than 100 yards of total offense. Senior linebackers Ben Evenson and Orlando Greco made eight tackles each for the Broncos. Sophomore Julian Figueroa contributed seven tackles.



Montini Catholic's Joey Neustadt finished with four catches for 102 yards in Friday's 48-0 season-opening win over Hoopeston in Lombard. Neustadt, a Lombard resident, is pictured during his 47-yard reception. (Submitted photo)

See MONTINI, Page 11

Worth the wait: Willowbrook tops Glenbard East in OT

Warriors win first season opener since 2018;

Rams tie score late after 50-minute lightning delay

It wasn't quick, pretty or easy, but the Willowbrook football team managed to beat Glenbard East in Friday's 2026 season opener in Lombard.

The visiting Rams scored a touchdown with less than 30 seconds to play in the fourth quarter and added the extra-point kick to even the score at 13-13.

The Warriors' offensive unit scored a touchdown on the first series of the overtime period, when senior Dionel Rocha crossed the goal line on a 3-yard run on a fourth-and-goal play. Senior Dylan Borkowski then made the extra-point kick to give the Warriors a 7-point lead. When Glenbard East failed to produce a touchdown on its ensuing drive, Willowbrook closed out a 20-13 victory.

"I knew it was coming to me, and I was excited," said Rocha while discussing his overtime score. "I was ready for this. I knew this was meant for me. This is my family. This is my home. I've got to give everything I've got for these people."

The crowd that witnessed the game's final play at 11:16 p.m. was much smaller than the sizable audience that filled the bleachers for the opening kickoff at 7:32 p.m. The threat of rain dodged the area for most of the evening, but flashes of lightning caused an extremely brief delay at 9:34 p.m., when there were more than four minutes left in the third quarter. There was initially an announcement to clear the field at that time, but after some discussion between coaches, school administrators and officials, the game continued about two minutes later.

At 10:02 p.m., when Glenbard East had the ball at its own 41-yard line with about five minutes to play in the fourth quarter, there were more flashes of lightning. Players and spectators exited the stadium for what turned out to be a delay of about 50 minutes. When the contest resumed, the lightning had left the area, but the first rainfall of the night arrived. Glenbard East's offense marched down the field as the brief shower passed through.

The rain had stopped by the time the Rams reached the goal line and scored on a 2-yard touchdown run by senior Monti Perry, who produced several key runs during the late 81-yard scoring drive. Senior Moises Velazquez added the extra-point kick to tie the score at 13-13 with 28.4 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter.

The Warriors took a knee on the next play from scrimmage to run the clock out and head into overtime action, which was contested on the south end of the stadium's field. Some spirited students from both schools, who made up most of the remaining audience, moved from their sections on the north end of the stadium to the south end to get a better view of the overtime period.

Willowbrook's football program had not beaten Glenbard East since 2012, when the Warriors won a wild 42-41 battle in that year's season opener in Villa Park. Willowbrook and the Rams have not faced off



TOP: The Warriors celebrate on the field after their overtime victory over Glenbard East on Friday in Villa Park. BOTTOM LEFT: Willowbrook's Dionel Rocha (19) scores on his 11-yard TD run in the first quarter. BOTTOM CENTER: Glenbard East's Monti Perry (1) rushed for 136 yards and a TD Friday. BOTTOM RIGHT: Glenbard East's Moises Velazquez (19) kicked two field goals and an extra point at Willowbrook. (Photos by Chris Fox)

See WILLOWBROOK, Page 11

•Montini (From page 10)

Sophomore Patrick Boeh recovered a fumble, while senior Andrew Cnastka intercepted a Hoopeson pass.

Montini will try to improve to 2-0 when it travels to Orland Park this Friday to face the Sandburg Eagles (1-0).

The Broncos honored former head coach

Chris Andriano before Friday's season opener. The stadium turf at Montini was replaced in June. The new athletic surface is named "Chris Andriano Field" in honor of the longtime coach, who guided the Broncos' football program to six IHSA state championships during his 38-season tenure (1979-2016).

•Willowbrook (Continued from page 10)

every year since then. Glenbard East won nine of 11 season-opening games against Willowbrook from 2005 to 2015. The two programs resumed their rivalry in 2024, when the Rams won a thrilling 30-23 contest in Villa Park. Willowbrook took the lead in the closing minute of that game, but Glenbard East scored a touchdown in the waning seconds to pull out a victory.

One year ago, the Rams beat Willowbrook 28-21 in the 2025 season opener in Lombard.

In addition to ending their losing streak against the Rams on Friday night, the Warriors snapped a string of six straight losses in season openers. Willowbrook had not won its Week 1 contest since 2018, when the team wound up winning its first 11 games before losing 34-27 in overtime at Batavia in an IHSA Class 7A quarterfinal. The Warriors then lost six straight openers from 2019 to 2025. There was no 2020 season due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Glenbard East's offense moved the ball down the field during the game's opening drive before turning the ball over on a fumble. The Warriors made the recovery at their own 20-yard line.

Willowbrook took the lead when Rocha delivered an 11-yard touchdown run with 4:42 to play in the first quarter. Senior quarterback Nate Jerkovic completed a 44-yard pass to senior JJ Miulli on the previous play to set up Rocha's scoring run. Senior Ben Swanson made the extra-point kick to give the Warriors a 7-0 lead.

Glenbard East sophomore Diamond Chew made a long return of the ensuing kick-off to lead to his team's first score, a 27-yard field goal by Velazquez with 1:45 left in the first quarter. Velazquez added a 23-yard field goal with 7:21 remaining in the second quarter to cut the Warriors' lead to 7-6.

Both teams committed multiple turnovers in Friday's game. In one exchange in the second quarter, Willowbrook senior Nick Aleman intercepted a Glenbard East pass at midfield. The Warriors fumbled on the next play from scrimmage, and senior A.J. Triplett of the Rams made the recovery.

The Warriors expanded their lead shortly after Jerkovic and Miulli hooked up on another long pass play in the third quarter. Willowbrook



Willowbrook's Dylan Borkowski (22) celebrates after intercepting a Glenbard East pass in the end zone during the third quarter of Friday's season opener. Borkowski also made the extra-point kick in overtime of the Warriors' 20-13 victory. (Photo by Chris Fox)

then scored on a 16-yard touchdown run by sophomore Jackson Dyers. The Warriors were unable to connect on a two-point conversion pass, leaving their lead at 13-6 with 7:19 left in the third quarter.

Borkowski ended a Glenbard East scoring drive when he leaped to make an interception in the end zone with 4:19 remaining in the third quarter.

The Rams' offense came to life after the fourth-quarter lightning delay, with Perry turning in several key runs, including a pair of rushes for first downs on fourth-down plays.

Perry rushed for 138 yards on 16 carries. Glenbard East sophomore quarterback Carter Pohlman completed 10 of 22 pass attempts for 66 yards. He threw two interceptions. Senior Malachi Miller made seven receptions for 54 yards.

"I think we showed some resolve, getting down the field and finding a way to get this thing tied and get it into overtime. We put the ball on the deck twice in overtime. You can't do that."

Walters also noted the

Rams' turnovers during regulation.

"We threw a couple of interceptions," he said. "We fumbled a few times. You've got to be able to handle the football and not turn it over. We just need to play better, more consistent football. We need to eliminate penalties, too."

Glenbard East was flagged for 13 penalties during Friday's game. The Warriors were called for 15 penalties.

"Not pretty; a ton of stuff to shore up," said Willowbrook coach Nick Hildreth. "I feel like it was a totally typical Week 1 game. Give our guys credit for hanging in there, just sticking with it and battling. It's nice to learn where you need to shore things up and what you need to do while still finding a way to win the game."

The Warriors' season continues with this Friday's game at Oswego East (1-0). Willowbrook will open its West Suburban Gold Conference season with a Sept. 4 contest at Leyden. Glenbard East will face Plainfield North (1-0) this Friday in Lombard. The Rams will begin their Upstate Eight Conference East Division season with a Sept. 4 game at Fenton.

Montini honors legendary coach



Former Montini Catholic football coach Chris Andriano is pictured with his grandchildren before the Broncos' Aug. 21 season-opening game in Lombard. The synthetic playing surface at Montini's stadium was replaced in June. The new surface is named "Chris Andriano Field" in honor of the longtime coach, who led the Broncos to six IHSA state titles during his 38 seasons (1979-2016) as the program's head coach. (Submitted photo)

Willowbrook girls begin season



Willowbrook's girls golf team opened its 2026 season with an Aug. 19 dual meet against York at the Dukes' home venue of Sugar Creek Golf Course in Villa Park. York beat the Warriors in the meet's team standings. Willowbrook junior Abigail Tompkins (left) shot a 9-hole score of 47 on the par-32 course. Senior Alyssa Hirsch (right) had a 49 for the Warriors. (Photos by Chris Fox)

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.

Aug. 18

A complainant at a store in the 1-100 block of E. St. Charles reported that a subject was selling candy at the entrance. The subject, who reportedly became aggressive when asked to leave, was subsequently issued a trespass warning.

A 59-year-old Villa Park man was charged with domestic battery near Cortesi and E. Kenilworth at 6:01 p.m. He was transported to the DuPage County Jail.

A complainant at a store in the 200 block of W. Roosevelt reported at 7:44 p.m. that a subject removed merchandise from display shelves and left without paying.

Aug. 16

Walter P. Cujano, 36, of Villa Park, was charged with aggravated DUI/license suspended or revoked, improper lane usage and disobeying a stop sign in the 300 block of N. Princeton.

A 46-year-old Villa Park man was charged with domestic battery in the 300 block of N. Ardmore at 12:21 a.m. He was transported to the DuPage County Jail.

Don Williams Jr., 20, of Chicago, was charged with aggravated unlawful use of a weapon/previous conviction, unlawful possession of a weapon/firearm/ammunition by a felon, aggravated fleeing and eluding a police officer exceeding 21 mph over the speed limit, obstructing identification and improper lane usage near N. Mill and I-290 eastbound at 8:10 p.m.

A complainant in the 1-100 block of W. Jackson reported that a subject approached their vehicle and attempted to batter them.

Aug. 15

Paul C. Bodenshtab, 57, of Villa Park, was charged with aggravated battery in a public place at a store in the 1-100 block of E. St. Charles at 8:39 a.m.

Johnny E. Polk, 64, and Roberto Alcala, 55, both of Villa Park, were both issued citations for public intoxication/possession of alcohol in an open container in a public place, while David N. Chernov, 28, of Hillside, was issued a citation for possession of alcohol in an open container in a public place near N. Ardmore and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks at 8:50 p.m. Polk additionally was issued a citation for fighting in a public place.

Aug. 14

Fernando Barragan-Melch, 25, of Addison, was charged with two counts of retail theft not exceeding \$300 and resisting an officer at a store in the 1-100 block of E. North at 6:45 p.m.

Johnny E. Polk, 64, of Villa Park, was issued citations for possession of alcohol in an open container in a public place and littering at the Metra station at 8:42 p.m. David N. Chernov, 28, of Hillside, and Amberlynn Arias, 35, of Villa Park, also were issued citations for possession of alcohol in an open container in a public place.

A complainant in the 400 block of N. Wisconsin reported at 2:42 a.m. that a subject damaged a window. The complainant did not wish to sign complaints.

Aug. 12

While conducting an extra patrol at the Metra station in the 300 block of N. Ardmore at 3:13 a.m., officers discovered damage to the door at the station.

Cheryl M. Ermilio, 45, of Villa Park, was charged with violation of pre-trial release in the 500 block of N. Ardmore at 2:53 p.m.

Virginia L. Fernandez Garces, 28, of Chicago, was charged with endangering the life or health of a child at a store in the 900 block of S. Route 83 at 10:32 a.m.

A complainant at a store in the 1-100 block of E. North reported at 7:48 p.m. that a subject removed merchandise from display shelves and attempted to leave without paying.

A complainant at a hotel in the 1-100 block of W. Roosevelt reported at 1:08 a.m. that they were arguing with another tenant and were disturbed by some of the words exchanged.

A complainant at a store in the 1-100 block of E. North reported at 12:37 p.m. that a subject removed merchandise from display shelves and attempted to leave without paying. The subject was issued a citation.

Live music in Villa Park



Villa Park's Thursday Summer Concerts series continued with the Aug. 20 performance from No Limits Sound. The Chicagoland band, which covers popular genres from the 1970s, '80s, '90s, and 2000s, along with current hits, performed in ideal weather conditions. Villa Park's Thursday Summer Concerts series concludes with the Aug. 27 concert from Industrial Drive, which plays a wide variety of rock hits. The concert will begin at 6:30 p.m. The concession stand opens at 6 p.m. (Photo by Chris Fox)



In the driver's seat at Big Rigs event

The Villa Park Parks and Recreation Department held its annual Big Rigs and Kids event on Saturday morning in the Ardmore Business District. The event, held adjacent to the inaugural Villa Fest celebration, gave children a chance to explore a variety of vehicles, including vehicles from the village's police, fire and public works departments. This photo from Saturday morning shows siblings Jack and Agnes Hanahan, ages 4 and 5, in the driver's seat of a garbage truck. (Photo by Chris Fox)

School News

Willowbrook Athletics shares reminders about digital ticketing, Senior Gold Card

Willowbrook High School's athletic department reminds everyone that the school no longer accepts cash payments for admission into home sporting events. Willowbrook has partnered with GoFan digital ticketing for home athletic events to allow spectators (home and away) to pre-purchase their tickets or buy them at the ticket booth. Through GoFan, the spectators may pay by credit card, debit card, Apple Pay and Google Pay.

Admission rates are \$4 (plus a \$1 credit card processing fee) for adults and \$2 (plus a \$1 processing fee) for students without a District 88 school ID. Admission is also \$2 (plus a \$1 processing fee) for senior citizens without a District 88 Senior Gold Card. Admission is free for District 88 students with a school ID, and for District 88 Senior Gold Card members.

Tickets for Willowbrook home athletic events can be bought online at [www.dupage88.net/WBATHleticTickets](https://dupage88.net/WBATHleticTickets).

Willowbrook encourages families to buy the \$50 Activity Pass at <https://dupage88.net/wbhs-activity-pass>. This pass covers a family's entry into most athletic events, plays and other selected events at the school that require an entrance fee.

For athletics, the only time an Activity Pass is invalid is for Illinois High School Association (IHSA) State Series events.

Senior citizens (65 years old or older) who live within District 88's boundaries can enjoy the benefits of District 88's free Senior Gold Card. With the card, they can experience athletic events,

musical performances and more for free at Willowbrook. See details and sign up at www.dupage88.net/SeniorGoldCard.

For more information, contact Willowbrook Assistant Principal for Athletics and Operations Ed Sullivan at esullivan@dupage88.net or 630-330-3406.

Willowbrook Athletics launches app for fans to stay up to date with Warrior sports programs

Willowbrook's athletic department has launched a new, all-in-one app powered by Snap! Mobile. Designed as a one-stop shop, the Willowbrook Athletics app provides quick and easy access to schedules, scores, rosters, news and updates. Key features include:

Dedicated program pages: Custom pages for all 31 sports, with the ability to filter updates by team level (varsity, junior varsity, freshmen).

Real-time schedules: Event calendars sync directly with Willowbrook's athletics website and update every hour.

Fan guide: Quick access to information regarding Willowbrook's athletic registration, activity pass, Athletic Booster Club and Athletic Hall of Fame, as well as the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

Media: Links to team social media accounts, NFHS Network live streams, Athlete of the Month features, news and contest maps.

Fundraising: View and support team fundraising campaigns.

To download the Willowbrook Athletics app, go to <https://willowbrook.app.link/download>, or visit the app store.

Rocha's fourth-down run lifts Willowbrook over Glenbard East

By SCOTT SCHMID

Shaw Local News Network correspondent

Willowbrook football has experienced a wealth of success during head coach Nick Hildreth's tenure, just usually not in week one.

So having to wait a little longer for their first victorious opener since 2018 was just fine with the Warriors.

After a lightning delay cleared the field, Willowbrook returned a half hour later to claim a 20-13 victory over Glenbard East in overtime.

Dionel Rocha's three-yard touchdown run on fourth-and-goal in the first extra session was the difference after the Warriors' defense kept the Rams out of the end zone on their possession, the final play of the game being a fumbled snap.

"Seeing the play call, I was really excited," said Rocha, a senior. "I was



Dionel Rocha

ready for this (moment). I've had my ups and downs with football, I thought about quitting. But I came back and I've worked hard. I have to give it everything I've got for these guys, this is my home.

"We beat the (week one) curse and did it against our crosstown rivals. I guess we've always lost in the first game but this team is different. Everyone was hyped, everyone was cheering for each other. We've got a good team and we've got great chemistry."

The Rams were trailing 13-6 with the ball at their own 41-yard line with five minutes remaining when

lightning was seen. Upon the resumption of play, Montii Perry carried the ball 10 times, the last of which was a two-yard touchdown run to tie the score with 28 seconds left. The senior finished with 134 yards on 17 attempts.

Malachi Miller added eight receptions for 61 yards.

"We showed some resolve going down the field," said Glenbard East coach John Walters, whose team was 9-2 a year ago and has reached the playoffs seven seasons in a row (not counting the COVID year), "and found a way to get this thing tied and into overtime. We were just not clean in overtime. We put the ball on the ground twice."

"Montii is a really good football player. But overall, we just have to play better and be more consistent and we need to eliminate the penal-

ties too."

Rocha had opened the scoring with an 11-yard run in the opening quarter. A pair of field goals by Moises Velazquez brought Glenbard East within 7-6 at halftime before Jackson Dyers found pay dirt on a 17-yard run off a reverse in the third.

JJ Miulli led the Willowbrook offense with two catches for 97 yards.

"It was not pretty and we have a ton of stuff to clean up," said Hildreth, whose teams have now won four week one games in his 16 years, according to him. "But it was a typical week one game. Anytime you've got a new group, you have to build confidence and to get to learn what you have to shore up while still winning the game is a good thing. Give our guys credit for hanging in there even though this is not how you'd probably draw it up."

FOOTBALL: IC CATHOLIC PREP 35, NAZARETH 21

ICC sophomore Baldwin steals the show with 2 TDs in win over Nazareth

By BOB NARANG

contact@shawmedia.com

IC Catholic Prep sophomore running back Jakobe Baldwin is not a household name in high school football.

Yet.

After starting one game and playing in three games last season, Baldwin tirelessly worked on his game and body during the offseason to prepare for a heavier workload for his second varsity season.

"I worked really hard this offseason and was very proud and thankful to get the start for the opener," Baldwin said. "My coaches worked me hard and trained me hard in summer camp to get where I am at right now."

The 6-foot, 185-pound Baldwin proved he was definitely ready and up to the task against the six-time state champ Nazareth on Friday night.

On a field with several elite play-



Jakobe Baldwin

ers with Power 4 offers, Baldwin stole the show by rushing for 202 yards and two touchdowns to lead IC Catholic to a 35-21 win over Nazareth at Lewis Stadium.

"I'm very excited to be 1-0

and to keep pushing forward and getting better every day," Baldwin said. "I'm thankful for the O-line for blocking."

The Knights, who had lost the last two meetings to the Roadrunners, tallied 248 yards on the ground and 252 in the air. Yet, Baldwin had the majority of IC's rushing yards in a breakout performance under the lights.

Baldwin entered the day without a single scholarship offer, but said he has interest from Nebraska, Iowa and "other schools," and he does not

have any visits planned yet for the college football season.

Baldwin's speed, power and toughness running was on full display, as he got stronger during the second half. He had five runs of 10 yards or longer in the final two quarters, highlighted by a 65-yard TD run on the left side as he outran Nazareth's defense along the sidelines to pad the lead to 34-14 midway through the fourth quarter.

"I got the ball and saw a hole opening up and knew that I had to take it, trusted my blockers and followed my blockers and trusted my coaches and the receivers made good blocks, so did the O-line," Baldwin said.

IC Catholic junior wide receiver Grant Bowen, who has 35 offers, had a typical big game. The 6-4, 225-pound hauled in five passes for 105 yards to go with TD grabs 17 and 10 yards.

Bowen said the offense was in sync all game long, helped by Baldwin's running. Senior quarterback

Nate Lang passed for 252 yards and three touchdowns and rushed for 42 yards.

"We played really well today and really wanted to beat them after losing to them the past few years, and we really wanted to show we were the better team," Bowen said. "This is a huge statement win after back-to-back losses to them. It feels really good to beat them. Jakobe Baldwin is a really great player and really underrated right now and is an under-the-radar player and will skyrocket after a great offseason."

In a matchup of Chicago Catholic League teams with each team with six state championships, the Knights dominated the line of scrimmage and limited the Roadrunners to 48 yards rushing. Nazareth junior quarterback JJ Chapman, a transfer from Oak Creek in Wisconsin, flashed a strong and accurate arm, finishing with 292 yards passing, a touchdown and two interceptions.

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