

## SPORTS

## TODAY IN SPORTS HISTORY

**Aug. 10, 1971:** Minnesota's Harmon Killebrew becomes 10th player to hit 500 HRs.

**Aug. 11, 1929:** The New York Yankees' Babe Ruth becomes first Major League Baseball player to hit 500 home runs.

19

SUBURBAN LIFE

shawlocal.com/my-suburban-life • Suburban Life • August 10-11, 2023

## GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

## 5 storylines to watch in the area

By JOSHUA WELGE  
jwelge@shawmedia.com

With the fall season of the 2023-24 school year quickly approaching – the first official practices began Monday – it's time to take a look at some of the most compelling storylines for the girls volleyball season this year.

### Can IC Catholic Prep return to Redbird – and win it all?

Behind Penn State recruit and 2022 Suburban Life Player of the Year Ava Falduto, IC Catholic enjoyed a spectacular 33-2 season. But the Knights fell just short in their bid for the program's fourth state championship, dropping the Class 2A final to Genoa-Kingston.

The good news? IC Catholic looks loaded for another run with just two seniors graduated from the state runner-up.

Falduto returns as the Knights' centerpiece, and there's a ton of talent around her. Falduto, senior setter Lucy Russ, senior libero Alysa Lawton, senior middle Jenny Fromelt and junior outside Kiely Kempf all return from the starting lineup, making IC Catholic one of the heavy favorites in Class 2A.

### Kenny sisters' final season together at Willowbrook

The Willowbrook volleyball program has enjoyed a renaissance the past two seasons and a big reason is the talents of sisters Calli and Hannah Kenny.

Willowbrook went 37-2 in 2021 and won the program's first regional and sectional championships. The Warriors followed that up last fall by going 36-3 with a West Suburban Gold title and 29-match win streak and reached a sectional final.

Calli Kenny is a senior and headed for Marquette a year from now. What can the Warriors and the Kenny sisters do in their final season together?

### Can St. Francis go back to back?

After a seven-year state title drought, St. Francis knocked off defending champion Nazareth in the 2022 Class 3A final for the program's 13th state championship.

The Spartans might not have to wait that long for title No. 14.

Wisconsin recruit Addy Horner, a



IC Catholic's Ava Falduto hits a shot against Genoa-Kingston in the 2022 Class 2A championship match.



St. Francis celebrates winning the 2022 Class 3A state championship.

6-foot-3 junior, led St. Francis in kills and was second in assists last season and leads a ton of firepower returning in Wheaton. Also back is senior setter KK Dumpit, senior outside Anna Paquette and senior libero Liv Basel. Don't be surprised to see the Spartans back at Redbird Arena in November.

### Can Benet return to the top?

The Benet volleyball program has been a regular at Redbird Arena under head coach Brad Baker, with eight state trophies in the past 15 years there

has been a state tournament. The Redwings have played in 13 sectional finals the past 15 years, winning nine of them. Last year, Benet lost a three-set Class 4A final to Mother McAuley, just missing the Redwings' fifth state title and first since 2019.

Can they break through this year?

Knocking off McAuley could be a chore. The Mighty Macs are loaded and perhaps even better than last year. Benet graduated three of its five attackers, but is extremely deep with defensive players led by Indiana



Willowbrook's Calli Kenny goes up for a kill during a 2022 Class 4A Proviso West Sectional final against St. Charles East.

recruit Aniya Warren, perhaps the best libero in the state in Class 4A.

Sophomore Lynney Tarnow and Gabby Stasys make up a dynamic combo in the middle and junior setter Audrey Asleson is committed to Colorado. A question mark is who is outside opposite Ava Novak, who led Benet in kills last year. The schedule, as usual, is a bear.

### Olivia Austin's three-sport excellence

Is there currently a better three-sport standout in the area than Nazareth senior Olivia Austin?

There are none as decorated.

Austin, a 6-foot-2 middle hitter, has made four appearances at Redbird Arena over the course of her high school career – two each in volleyball and basketball. She helped lead Nazareth's basketball team to its first state title in March after starring for Nazareth's volleyball team, which won its first state title in 2021 and took second last year.

Should she book a double stay in Normal for this school year?

Nazareth's volleyball team brings back a good deal of talent. Also back is senior outside Lauren Salata, who led Nazareth in kills last year, and senior libero Reese Butkus. The Roadrunners must replace the multidimensional talents of Kitty Sandt at setter and hitter.

## PREP FOOTBALL

## 5 area storylines to watch this season

By JOSHUA WELGE  
jwelge@shawmedia.com

The high school football season began Monday with the start of pre-season practices. Here are some of the top storylines to watch in the Suburban Life area this season.

### IC Catholic Prep and St. Francis join the CCL/ESCC

IC Catholic Prep and St. Francis, which dominated the Metro Suburban Conference in recent seasons, has joined the CCL/ESCC mega-conference. The Knights and Spartans have been slotted in the CCL/ESCC Orange Division with Nazareth and Fenwick.

It's a step up in class.

In the past, IC Catholic and St. Francis routinely stacked together blowout conference wins in the Metro Suburban, the main exception their annual matchup.

Not anymore. IC Catholic's schedule now includes Nazareth, Marist and Loyola. St. Francis will face Joliet Catholic, St. Rita and Nazareth. There's also the IC Catholic-St. Francis matchup in Week 6. While IC Catholic and St. Francis have rosters more than capable of deep playoff runs, the road to five wins will be a grind in the CCL/ESCC.

With the Metro Suburban football league no more, Riverside-Brookfield has moved to the Southland Conference, Wheaton Academy to the Chicagoland Christian conference and Westmont to the Chicagoland Prairie.

### Can Nazareth and IC Catholic repeat?

IC Catholic and Nazareth both added to their state titles collection in 2022, the Knights winning the Class 3A championship and the Roadrunners the Class 5A crown in Champaign. This year, the state finals move to Illinois State's Hancock Stadium in Normal.

Will these two programs be there?

The pieces certainly are in place. IC Catholic, which because of the IHSA multiplier is projected to be in the Class 4A bracket according to Shaw Media's Steve Soucie, brings back Iowa recruit KJ Parker at receiver and defensive back and quarterback Dennis Mandala for their fourth varsity seasons, along with Texas A&M recruit Eric Karner at tight end, standout linebacker JP Schmidt and playoff sensation Joey Glatka at running back.

Nazareth won the 2022 Class 5A title after a 1-3 start to the season with an exceptionally young roster, including nine sophomores and a freshman starting. Junior quarterback Logan Malachuk is back for his third season as starter. Junior defensive end Gabe



Nazareth's William Beagle and his teammates hoist the trophy after their Class 5A state championship win over Peoria in Champaign.

Kaminski is one of the state's top recruits in the Class of 2025.

Nazareth and IC Catholic will face off in Week 4 in Elmhurst in a division opener.

The hardest part of getting back to state, as Nazareth has found out, could be navigating through the regular season to reach five wins.

### West Suburban Silver and DuKane power conferences

As leagues go statewide, few are as loaded top to bottom as the West Suburban Silver and the DuKane Conference. Both conferences had four playoff qualifiers last season and seven of those eight teams won at least one postseason game.

No reason to believe they'll take a step back.

York is coming off the first 9-0 regular season in the 102-year history of the program and a Class 8A state semifinal appearance. The Dukes return All-State linebacker Cole Ostendorf and clearly have things rolling with head coach Mike Fitzgerald. Glenbard West still has the pedigree and talent in running back Julius Ellens. Lynps and Downers Grove North aren't far behind as programs on the rise. And that's not even including Hinsdale Central, which missed the playoffs last year but won back-to-back Silver titles before last season.

In the DuKane, Batavia reached the Class 7A final last season, a year after Wheaton North won the Class 7A championship - and neither of them won the DuKane last season. That distinction belonged to St. Charles North. On top of that, the most talented player



Members of the IC Catholic football team hoist the Class 3A state championship trophy in November 2022 at Memorial Stadium in Champaign.

Scott Anderson file photo - sanderson@shawmedia.com

in the league is from Geneva, junior wide receiver Talyn Taylor.

Count on at least one, and probably more, dynamite games each week in each league and both conferences making noise again come playoff time.

### Division I recruit star power

As usual, there will be no shortage of Division I star power for area teams. Dynamic skill-position talent includes Glenbard South senior receiver Cam Williams, a Notre Dame recruit, Parker and Karner of IC Catholic, Ball State-bound quarterback Alessio Milivojevic of St. Francis and Julius Ellens of Glenbard West.

Standouts up front include Lyons lineman Eddie Tuerk, an Illinois recruit, and Power 5 prospects Kaminski, York junior Joseph Reiff and Fenwick junior Nathaniel Marshall, who holds 17 scholarship offers including Alabama. Headliners defensively include Illinois recruit Joe Barna and Downers Grove North's Cael Brezina, both linebackers.

### Can Montini and Willowbrook bounce back?

Montini and Willowbrook, two of the more well-regarded programs in DuPage County, each will be looking to rebound from what were challenging 2022 seasons to different degrees.

Montini, which had gone three decades without missing the playoffs, had its second consecutive 3-6 season in 2022. Part of that can be attributed to life in the CCL/ESCC. The Broncos, though, seem confident they can have a bounce-back season with multidimensional George Asay and running back Alex Marre leading the way.

Willowbrook made the playoffs in 2022, but its five wins were the fewest in a nine-game season since 2015. The Warriors had their hold on the West Suburban Gold title wrested away by Downers Grove South. But Willowbrook looks capable of a rebound with four-year starting quarterback Arthur Palicki and 10 juniors who received varsity experience as sophomores.



JOE PEARSON PHOTOS Rock Valley Publishing

## Willowbrook Booster Club presents Most Outstanding Male Athlete award to two Warriors

Willowbrook High School's Athletic Booster Club held its senior athletic banquet near the end of the 2022-23 school year. The banquet, which was held at the school, featured the presentation of scholarships and awards to several members of Willowbrook's Class of 2023. There were two recipients of the Booster Club's Most Outstanding Male Athlete award this year. Dallas Isaacson and Isaac Sobleszczyk were both honored with the award. Isaacson was a member of the Warriors' football and boys gymnastics teams during his senior year. One photo (above) from the banquet shows (left to right) Willowbrook football coach Nick Hildreth, Isaacson, Willowbrook boys gymnastics coach (and Dallas' father) Andy Isaacson and Willowbrook Athletic Director Brandon Murphy. Sobleszczyk played for Willowbrook's boys basketball and baseball teams during his senior year. Another photo (below) from the banquet shows (left to right) Willowbrook baseball coach Vic Wisner, Sobleszczyk, Willowbrook boys basketball coach Chris Perkins and Murphy. Isaacson will attend the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Sobleszczyk will attend Bradley University, where he will be a member of the Braves' baseball team.



CHRIS FOX PHOTOS Rock Valley Publishing

## Victorious Mariners

The Villa Park Mariners completed their 2023 season by swimming at the DuPage Swim and Dive Conference's Red Division 'A' Meet in Bartlett. The Villa Park swimmers who earned individual victories during the July 22 meet included Leighton Stempel, who won races in the 8-and-under girls division. She is pictured (above) during her first-place performance in the 25-yard breaststroke. Another photo shows Villa Park's Phoebe Aldana, who swam to two individual wins in the meet's 11-12 girls level. She is shown (below) during her victory in the 50-yard breaststroke. One more photo shows Aldana (bottom) of the Mariners entering the water during the girls division's 200-yard freestyle relay. Villa Park's foursome of Carroia, Lydia Aldana, Ruth Aldana and Elfin Stempel delivered a first-place effort in the race. The same four Mariners won the 200-yard freestyle relay earlier in the meet. Bartlett won the team title in the four-team Red Division 'A' Meet. Roselle finished second. Butterfield landed third place, while Villa Park wound up in fourth place. The Mariners will swim in the conference's Blue Division next season.

