

IHSA football playoffs begin tonight, some play on Saturday

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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The ultimate goal is to reach Memorial Stadium at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana Thanksgiving weekend.

But for six area football teams, that journey gets under way this weekend as the 43rd IHSA Football Championship begins.

Those six teams – Edwardsville, Marquette Catholic, Civic Memorial, East Alton-Wood River, Hardin-Calhoun and Carrollton – all want to be the ones lifting the state championship trophy in their respective classes the weekend of Nov. 25-26 at the field where Illini football legends once played.

Here's a brief look at each of the six first-round games set for this weekend:

CLASS 8A – OAK PARK-RIVER FOREST AT EDWARDSVILLE: Kickoff at Tiger Stadium is set for 6 p.m. this evening as Edwardsville gets started against the Chicago-area Huskies, representing the West Suburban Silver.

The Tigers enter the contest at 8-1 on the year, having defeated Granite City in their season finale last week and losing only to East St. Louis (who will represent the Southwestern Conference in the Class 7A playoffs) in Week 6; the Tigers were awarded the No. 12 seed in Class 8A.

The Huskies enter the game at 7-2 on the year, having dropped a 21-12 decision to undefeated Hinsdale Central (who got the No. 2 seed behind Wilmette Loyola Academy); they were given the No. 21 seed. Their losses came to the Red Devils and to Glen Ellyn Glenbard West in Week 7.

The winner of Friday's game gets the Joliet West-Oswego winner (set for 7 p.m. tonight) in the second round.

CLASS 4A – TAYLORVILLE AT MARQUETTE CATHOLIC: Marquette Catholic's 7-2 overall record, including an unbeaten run through the Prairie State Conference, helped get the Explorers the No. 8 southern seed in the Class 4A playoffs and a home playoff opener. They'll be facing the Apollo Conference's Taylorville, who got the No. 9 southern seed with a 7 p.m. kickoff at Public School Stadium in Alton; the Tornadoes are 7-2 going into the game, having blanked Civic Memorial 41-0 last week while the Explorers came from behind to defeat Salt Fork 16-6 last week.

Marquette's losses came in the first two weeks of the season to CM and Breese Mater Dei; Taylorville's losses came in the Apollo in Week 5 to Mount Zion and Week 8 to Mattoon.

The winner gets the Belleville Althoff-Carterville winner in the second round.

CLASS 4A – CIVIC MEMORIAL AT ROCHESTER: Civic Memorial got into the playoffs with a 5-4 overall mark in the Mississippi Valley Conference and has the daunting task of taking on 8-1 Rochester of the Central State Eight at 7 p.m. tonight on

the road. The Eagles were given the No. 12 seed in the Class 4A southern playoffs, while the Rockets got the No. 5 seed.

CM fell to Taylorville 41-0 last week to close out the regular season (the Tornadoes travel to Marquette Catholic for their first-round clash) while the Rockets only lost to undefeated Springfield Sacred Heart-Griffin in Week 7; Rochester defeated Springfield 41-23 on the road last week.

The winner of this game will take on the Olney Richland County-Mount Zion in the second round.

CLASS 3A – EAST ALTON-WOOD RIVER AT CARLINVILLE: East Alton-Wood River finished the season at 6-3 to earn their first playoff spot in 10 years with a 48-7 win over Mount Olive on the road last week; the Oilers were given the No. 13 southern seed in Class 3A and sent to fourth-seeded Carlinville of the South Central Conference for their first-round game, set for 7 p.m. tonight in Carlinville.

The Cavaliers went 8-1 on the year and defeated Litchfield 65-10 to close out the regular season last week; their only loss came in Week 4 to 8-1 Pana.

The Oilers-Cavs winner gets the Hillsboro-Williamsville winner in the second round next week.

CLASS 1A – CARROLLTON AT CAMP POINT CENTRAL: Carrollton had the deepest run of the area's teams in the 2015 playoffs, reaching the Class 1A quarterfinals before being eliminated by LeRoy, who fell to eventual Class 1A champion Arcola in the semifinals.

The Hawks go into this year's playoffs with a 6-3 mark after starting the year at 0-3 in the Western Illinois Valley South; they were awarded the No. 9 southern seed and drew 7-2 and eighth-seeded Camp Point Central of the Western Illinois Valley North in the opening round. Kickoff is set for 1 p.m. Saturday in Camp Point.

The Panthers dropped back-to-back decisions to Beardstown in Week 4 and Mendon Unity in Week 5; they defeated North Greene 41-6 last week. The Hawks defeated Concord Triopia 50-18 last week to win their way into the postseason after falling to Brown County, Mendon Unity and Greenfield-Northwestern the first three weeks of the season.

The Hawks got the ninth seed, with the Panthers awarded the eighth seed; the winner gets the Oblong-Tuscola winner in the second round.

CLASS 1A – HARDIN-CALHOUN AT ARCOLA: Hardin-Calhoun finished the year at 6-3 and as Western Illinois Valley South champions; the 6-3 Warriors were given the No. 12 southern seed and will meet fifth-seeded Arcola of the Little Okaw Valley West. The Purple Riders went unbeaten at 14-0 last year to win the Class 1A state championship; this year they enter the postseason at 7-2 having been defeated by Moweaqua Central A&M in Week 1 and Argenta-Oreana Week 4; the Riders haven't lost since.

The game is set for 2 p.m. Saturday in Arcola, located north of the Charleston-Mattoon area in east-central Illinois. The winner gets the Bridgeport Red Hill-Decatur Lutheran winner in the second round next weekend.