

# Playoffs near: Much at stake this Friday with prep football games

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For a few teams in the area, tonight is the night where postseason fates will be decided.

Several teams enter tonight's Week 9 games with five wins, which makes them eligible for the 44th IHSA Football Championship; others enter with six wins or more, which automatically qualifies them for the postseason party that begins next weekend.

Here's a look at who's in and who is on the verge of getting in (including teams from conferences that have Riverbender-area teams)

**DEFINITELY IN:** Triad, Marquette Catholic, East Alton-Wood River, Carrollton, East St. Louis, Highland, Carlinville, Greenville, Pana and Vandalia.

**WIN AND DEFINITELY IN (SIX WINS):** Edwardsville, Alton, South Mac, Hardin-Calhoun, South Fork, Hillsboro and Belleville West.

**WIN AND POSSIBLY IN (AT 5-4):** Pleasant Hill

Here's how **Week 9** shapes up for the area; all games kick off at 7 p.m. tonight unless otherwise noted:

Both Alton and Edwardsville enter their Southwestern Conference games tonight with playoff eligibility; both the Redbirds (5-3, 4-2) and Tigers (5-3, 5-1), with wins tonight, will assure themselves of heading to the postseason. The Redbirds head to Clyde Jordan Stadium for a date with SWC champ East St. Louis, while the Tigers host Collinsville at Tiger Stadium for their Senior Night contest. The Redbirds defeated Granite City at Memorial Stadium/Kevin Greene Field 56-14 last week, while the Tigers surprised Belleville West 45-14 thanks to five touchdown runs from Kendall Abdur-Rahman. The Warriors (2-6, 0-6) close out their season at home against O'Fallon (2-6, 2-4), the Warriors coming off their loss last week to Alton while the Panthers dropped a 54-7 decision at home to the Flyers last week.

In the Mississippi Valley Conference, Civic Memorial (1-7, 0-5) closes out the season with a home game against playoff bound Taylorville (7-1) of the Apollo Conference, the Eagles falling to Jersey 42-0 last week to go winless in the MVC; the Panthers, meanwhile, host Columbia (5-3) of the Cahokia Conference with the Eagles needing a win to assure themselves of a postseason berth. Triad (7-1, 4-1) will close out against the Apollo's Mount Zion (5-3) like Columbia needing a win to assure themselves of a playoff spot; the Knights got past Waterloo 23-14 last week.

In the Prairie State Conference, Marquette Catholic – assured of going in the postseason as PSC champions after their 49-6 win over South Mac last week – closes out at Public School Stadium against a South Fork team (5-3, 3-2) needing a win to assure themselves of a postseason spot; the Ponies dropped a 20-6 decision at Madison (the Trojans themselves going into this week's game against Dupu needing a win to clinch a spot in their first year back in football by themselves after co-opping with Metro East Lutheran the previous two seasons) last week. The Chargers (5-3, 4-1), meanwhile, head to East Alton-Wood River (6-2, 4-1) themselves in search of a win that would put them into the postseason; the Oilers are already in and a win may help with their seeding when the first-round pairings come out Saturday night.

The South Central Conference will be sending four teams to the postseason, with a fifth – Hillsboro – a possibility. Roxana (1-7 overall and SCC) will be wrapping up their season at the Bulldogs (3-5) coming off a 55-8 loss at Vandalia last week, while Staunton dropped a 48-0 decision at Carlinville; meantime, Piasa Southwestern (2-6)

hosts Gillespie (2-6) to finish out the season, the Piasa Birds being defeated 49-0 last week at Hillsboro while Greenville defeated the Miners 46-13 last week.

In the WIVC South, Carrollton (8-0) hopes to finish off an undefeated regular season with a trip to Camp Point Central (also in the postseason at 6-2); the Hawks defeated Jacksonville Routt 64-13 last week, while the Panthers downed Greenfield-Northwestern 40-6 last Friday; Hardin-Calhoun (5-3) hopes to nail down a playoff spot when they host Concord Triopia (4-4) at 7:30 p.m. The Warriors fell to Mendon Unity 31-28 to keep them from clinching a spot in the postseason, while the Trojans defeated North Greene 49-7 to put them a win away from playoff eligibility; a Concord win would do just that.

Greenfield (3-5) closes out the season at Beardstown (with a spot clinched at 6-2); the Tigers clinched a spot in the playoffs with a 42-14 win over West Central last week. North Greene (0-8) hopes to avoid a winless season when they host Brown County (heading to the postseason at 6-2) at 7:30 p.m.; the Hornets clinched a spot with a 34-7 win over Pleasant Hill last week. Metro East Lutheran (1-8) finishes the year with the back end of a home-and-home with Farmer City Blue Ridge (3-5), the Knights taking a 34-13 loss at home last week to Principia of St. Louis, while Blue Ridge defeated Varna Midland 44-12 last week.

The postseason pairings in all eight classes will be announced beginning at 8 p.m. Saturday via the IHSA web site ([www.ihsa.org](http://www.ihsa.org)) in a live stream on the site with their TV partner, NBC Sports Chicago (formerly Comcast SportsNet Chicago; all the Comcast SportsNet regional networks have now adopted NBC Sports branding through Comcast's NBC/Universal NBC Sports Group) the pairings can also be seen for those with Spectrum TV or other telco subscriptions by way of the NBC Sports LiveExtra app on smartphones and computers; times and dates of the opening round games will be announced early next week.