



East St. Louis Falls In 6A State Football Championship To Cary-Grove 37-36

by John Hough
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FOOTBALL

IHSA PLAYOFFS --- CLASS 6A CHAMPIONSHIP

CARY-GROVE 37, EAST ST. LOUIS 36: In what was widely considered the best game of the entire weekend, Cary-Grove and East St. Louis went toe-to-toe before the Trojans pulled off a 37-36 upset over the Flyers in the IHSA Class 6A football final Saturday afternoon at Northern Illinois University's Huskie Stadium in DeKalb.

Cary-Grove became the first in-state team to defeat East Side this season, and completed an undefeated 14-0 season to win its first championship since 2018, denying the Flyers its 10th championship. The Flyers are now 9-4 in championship games.

East Side scored first on a 53-yard pass from quarterback Robert "Pops" Battle to Luther Burden III, the first of three touchdowns Burden would score, after only 36 seconds to give the Flyers an 8-0 lead after TyRyan Martin's two-point run. Jameson Sheehan then countered for the Trojans with a 32-yard touchdown run, the first of three touchdowns for him, tying the score at 8-8 after Nicholas Hissong ran in for a two-point convert after 2:13 had been played.

Later in the quarter, Martin ran in from 15 yards out to give the Flyers a 14-8 lead after a two-point pass was incomplete, but Cary-Grove took its first lead at 15-14 with 3:34 left in the period on an eight-yard run by Hissong. Toby Splitt's convert put the Trojans up.

In the second quarter, Battle gave the Flyers the lead back at 20-15 on an 11-yard run, but the two-point convert was missed. The Trojans took the lead on a pair of Sheehan touchdown runs, from three and five yards out, with Hissong going in on a two-pointer with 3:58 left in the half and a Splitt convert after the second score with 1:58 to go, giving Cary-Grove a 30-20 lead at halftime.

Burden caught a 12-yard pass from Battle with 4:48 left in the third quarter to cut the lead to 30-28 after Battle ran in for a two-point convert, but early in the fourth quarter, Hissong ran in from nine yards out, with Splitt's convert giving Cary-Grove a 37-28 lead. On the ensuing kickoff, Burden took the ball and ran it back 80 yards for a touchdown, with Martin running in for two with 11:37 left in regulation. The Flyers could get no closer, as Battle was intercepted on the final play to give the Trojans the championship.

East Side finishes its season 11-3.

