

# Flyers Win 10th Football State Championship In Program History After Scoring 57 Unanswered Points

by Bradley Piros, Reporter  
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CHAMPAIGN – The Flyers were not going to dwell on what happened in last season’s title game, and they certainly weren’t going to let it happen again.

After a narrow 37-36 loss to Cary-Grove at Northern Illinois University in the 2021-22 IHSA Class 6A state championship, East Saint Louis was on somewhat of a revenge tour this season.

Their regular-season schedule started tough, and the Flyers dropped two of their first three games to Baltimore St. Francis (20-13) and Creekside, Georgia (10-8). Between those games, they did beat Christian Brothers College High School by a score of 64-19. To put that win in perspective, the CBC Cadets just won back-to-back Class 6 state championships across the river.

After these three games the Flyers took to conference play, and also didn't lose another game. They finished the season on a 10-game win streak culminating at Memorial Stadium on the campus of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Saturday afternoon.

In their final 10 games, seven of them were shutout victories, and three of those came in the playoffs.

The Flyers' postseason began at home on Saturday, October 29<sup>th</sup> with a 71-0 win over Oak Lawn Richards. Then they took to the road to beat Normal Community West 40-0. In their final home game of the season, the Flyers beat Crete-Monee 45-0.

Their toughest game of the season came against Lemont, who went into the semifinal game undefeated. East Side escaped by the skin of their teeth with a 32-29 win with one of the wildest fourth quarters ever seen.

That brings us to this season's state title game. After going down 7-0 to the Crystal Lake Prairie Ridge Wolves, East St. Louis scored 57 unanswered points to go on and win the game 57-7. It happened to be the most points scored in a Class 6A championship game.

Prairie Ridge got on the board first with a 14-yard run from Tyler Vasey. Little did the Wolves know, they weren't going to see the endzone again.

Not long after that play, the Flyers got their offense up and running. They marched 72 yards down the field for a score that ended with a 34-yard run from sophomore running back TaRyan Martin. After a botched snap, junior QB Robert Battle had to improvise. The ball ended up in the hands of senior linebacker and tight end Antwon Hayden for a successful two-point conversion. It wasn't exactly how they drew it up to take the lead, but they would take it.

The first quarter ended 8-7 Flyers.

In the second quarter, Martin got on his horse with a couple of eight-yard scores to stretch the lead to 22-8 at halftime.

While Martin finished the game with three TDs and 174 yards rushing, some other guys got to get on the scoresheet as well in the second half.

Battle connected a 27-yard pass to junior receiver Jesse Watson to open up the half. Battle later scored a 26-yard rushing TD.

Also in the third quarter, sophomore receiver Christian Bennet Jr. ran it in from 13 yards and junior receiver Rico Bond caught a 41-yard pass from Battle to make it 50-7. Bond also went perfect on extra points kicking seven through the uprights for his team.

Hayden finished the team's scoring with a 69-yard run on the first play of the fourth quarter to cap the game off at 57-7. The Flyers scored eight touchdowns which ties the record for most in a Class 6A championship game.

Battle went 10-12 passing for 207 yards and two touchdowns while also rushing for 63 yards and a TD.

The Flyers finish a 12-2 season with their 10<sup>th</sup> state championship in program history.



