

Nineteen-Play, 10-Minute Drive For Score Gives Cary-Grove IHSA Class 6A Football Title Over East St. Louis 23-20

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BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL - A 19-play, 71-yard drive that took 10:41 resulted in the winning touchdown on a two-yard run by sophomore Logan Abrams with 1:19 left in regulation to give Cary-Grove a 23-20 win over East St. Louis in the IHSA Class 6A football championship game Saturday afternoon at Hancock Stadium, on the campus of Illinois State University, in Bloomington-Normal.

The Flyers lost senior quarterback Robert "Pops" Battle in the second quarter, due to a leg injury, and it made a big difference in the Flyers' offense. Battle, who has committed to Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Mo., for next season, did not return, forcing East Side to turn to Reese Shanklin, a freshman. at quarterback.

Shanklin played well under the difficult circumstances, and the injury to Battle forced the Flyers to depend on their running game. Junior Larevious "Fresh" Woods ran for 98 yards and two touchdowns, while Battle had eight carries for 52 yards and a touchdown before his injury.

Battle was also 14-of-16 passing for 139 yards, while Christopher Bennett, Jr. had a big game receiving, catching 11 passes for 94 yards. Jesse Watson had two catches for 26 yards and Rico Bond had two catches for 21 yards.

The Trojans scored first in the opening quarter, via a one-yard run by Abrams to give Cary-Grove an 8-0 lead after a two-point run was good. The Flyers fought back in the second quarter on a two-yard run by Battle to cut the lead to 8-6 after a two-point run missed. Quarterback Peyton Seaburg connected 19 yards to Andrew Prio on the next drive to give the Trojans a 15-6 halftime lead.

The Flyers came to within 15-13 in the third when Woods went in from 18 yards out, then took the lead on the first play of the fourth quarter when Woods ran in from one yard out to give East Side a 20-15 lead, its only one of the game.

Cary-Grove then used its powerful ground game, as it had all day to keep the ball away from the Flyers' explosive offense, to go on its game-winning drive as Abrams scored and the Trojans successfully hit on a two-point conversion to take back the lead at 23-20.

Shanklin threw an interception on the second play after the Flyers got the ball to give the Trojans its second state championship over the Flyers, joining a 37-36 win in the final in 2021 at Champaign.

Both the Flyers and Trojans end the season 11-3.