

Press Clippings - 7/26/2024

- Daily Herald -

Who are the new prep football coaches to watch this season?

By: Kevin Schmit

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Former Bears kicker Robbie Gould was named the new varsity football coach at Rolling Meadows High School

We're getting closer.

Five weeks away from opening night for the IHSA prep football season, we're continuing out countdown to the glorious night awaiting us on Aug. 30.

Two weeks ago we presented seven opening games to watch. Last week we looked at six of the area's top senior recruits.

This week we're breaking down five key coaching changes in the area. The coaching carousel didn't spin too much in the off-season, but there will be some interesting new faces on the sideline this fall.

They're listed below in alphabetical order.

John Cowhey, Mundelein

Cowhey came to Mundelein six years ago. After serving as the program's sophomore coach, he takes over the varsity position following the departure of Vince DeFrancesco after five seasons.

Since last reaching the playoffs in 2004, the Mustangs have suffered a series of seasons with only one or two wins. The last three years, though, the program has been right on the edge of the postseason.

Twice they've won four games, including last season. Cowhey's familiarity with the returning players as well as the newcomers could be a springboard to a winning record and a playoff return this fall.

Don Gelsomino, York

A former head coach at Ridgewood — where he led the program to 18 wins and two playoff appearances in three seasons — Gelsomino takes the helm from Mike Fitzgerald, the new head coach at Marist.

Few area programs are on the kind of roll the Dukes have enjoyed the last two years. They're 23-3 with back-to-back appearances in the Class 8A semifinals, where they've suffered back-to-back losses to Loyola, the back-to-back state champion.

Gelsomino has been the team's defensive coordinator, serving as the perfect counter to Fitzgerald's role leading the offense.

Robbie Gould, Rolling Meadows

Oh yeah ... that guy.

The highest profile hire in the state in the off-season, the former Bears kicker brings instant excitement to a program looking to reach the playoffs for the first time since 2021.

Ideally, the Mustangs would like to return to the level of play they saw during a 2019 Class 7A run to the semifinals.

Gould, one of the most-successful kickers in NFL history, spent 11 of his 18 seasons with the Bears. He announced his retirement in December after not playing in 2023.

Less than three months later, he was hired as Rolling Meadows' new coach. He replaces Sam Baker, who took over the program during the COVID season of 2020-21.

Pat Pistorio, South Elgin

A familiar face is returning for the Storm.

Pistorio was the head coach at South Elgin from 2013 to 2017 while posting a 29-19 record and making two playoff appearances. He then spent three seasons at Niles North.

Pistorio replaces Dragan Teonic, who took over for Pistorio in 2018. South Elgin has won four straight conference titles and made six straight playoff appearances.

Adam Pucylowski, Waubonsie Valley

Pucylowski has strong experience behind him after serving as an assistant coach at North Central College and defensive coordinator at Naperville Central High School.

He takes the reins of the program from Tom Baumgartner, who stepped down after four seasons. The Warriors haven't reached the playoffs since 2018, but they were on the verge last year at 4-5.

Coming off an 0-9 season in 2022, the Warriors started last year 4-2. It's that kind of momentum Pucylowski hopes to regain, starting with the season opener against Oswego East.

- Daily Herald - Still at the top of his game, South Elgin's Ryan Nutof walks away from baseball. 'It was a real struggle.'

By: Paul Johnson

Date: July 25, 2024



South Elgin native Ryan Nutof, right, was leading the Florida State League with 10 saves in 2020 for the Cincinnati Reds' Class A Advanced affiliate Daytona before his promotion to Double-A Chattanooga.

On June 14, Ryan Nutof nailed down his league-leading 10th save for the Kane County Cougars.

Nutof lowered his ERA to 2.25, continuing a dominant season that saw him strike out 23 in 16 innings and put him on the radar for a return to affiliated baseball, maybe even the majors.

The next morning, he walked away from it all.

The South Elgin graduate announced his retirement at age 28, leaving behind the game he loved to pursue a career outside of baseball.

“It was a real struggle,” Nutof said Wednesday. “I pitched really well, throwing 97 (mph) still. People ask me, ‘Why did I go out like that?’ Sometimes, you just get tired of the battle.

“I got some good offers internationally, but I was intrigued by this job. I made the leap of faith.”

The MLB Players Association offers programs to help athletes transition to life after baseball. That’s how Nutof got the idea of perhaps moving on from the playing field.

After some interviews, Nutof was intrigued by an offer from Chicago-based technology company AHEAD. Nutof took some time to think about it, then took the plunge.

“If you would have told me that come July I would be working in tech, I’d think you were crazy,” Nutof said. “I’m just going to work hard and climb my way up this new ladder I’m on.

“The goal remains the same, for sure.”



South Elgin graduate Ryan Nutof throws a pitch for the Cincinnati Reds’ Class A Advanced affiliate Daytona in 2020 before his promotion to Double-A Chattanooga.

Cougars manager George Tsamis knew for a couple of weeks before Nutof’s announcement that this move could be on the horizon.

“You can’t blame him,” Tsamis said. “He had to do what was best for him and his family. It’s too bad because he still throws 97 and he could be in Triple-A. We totally get it, though. It was good that he got to come back and pitch at home for a while. It was a real good opportunity.

“We wish him the best. We still reach out to him and say, ‘Why don’t you come pitch for us for a month?’ We’d love for him to still pitch.”

Instead, Nutof will work out of the New York office for AHEAD from his home in Jupiter, Florida, where he moved four years ago to train during the offseason.

“I’m still not fully mentally used to not going to a stadium every day,” Nutof said. “But you wake up every day with an agenda and it brings you back to reality.

“I don’t regret the decision. It’s definitely interesting.”

South Elgin coach Jim Kating said Nutof came back and spoke to his program several times throughout his time in college at Michigan and in the Cincinnati Reds organization.

He was impressed with how Nutof handled this situation.

“It’s been very fun following him through the years,” Kating said. “He was doing well, but he had a time frame on it. If he’s not going to get picked up, then he needed to get on with his life.

“He was a tough competitor. Seeing his maturity and discipline, he’s grown into a solid young man. Whatever he chooses to do, he’ll succeed.”



Former South Elgin pitcher Ryan Nutof throws for Michigan in a 2015 Big Ten game against Iowa.

Nutof said he nearly reached his dream of reaching MLB last summer with the Reds.

The letdown of that not happening — and his ensuing trip through free agency in the minor leagues before signing with the Cougars — was on his mind as he contemplated this move.

“I don’t want to say I lost belief in myself,” Nutof said. “You get tired of the fight. I felt like I was always battling the decision-makers, especially when you reach free agency.