

East/Southeast KANSAS WEEK 1

# Football Pick Six

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## WEEK 1'S TOP GAMES IN EAST/SOUTHEAST KANSAS



### ST. THOMAS AQUINAS AT ST. JAMES ACADEMY



St. James Academy will ride high into the season after winning the team's first state championship last season. If history holds up, that feeling might not last too long. The Thunder will face rival St. Thomas Aquinas 7 p.m. Friday, Sept. 3 at Bishop Miede High School. Aquinas has beaten St. James in seven straight games over the last six seasons. Both teams will be looking to replace their key weapons on offense, although the reigning 4A champs have a few more departures on that front. Thunder junior quarterback Jackson House will step into the starter role in place of graduated Dakota Burritt. Sophomore running back Russell Malcolm will look to replace a depleted backfield after the now Air Force freshman and Top 11 pick La'James White and the next two top runners graduated as well. Aquinas will need to replace their top runner as well with two-time Top 11 selection Tank Young gone after a 16-touchdown, 1,338-yard senior campaign in 2019. The Saints have a clearer transition plan with Sean Carroll entering his junior year. Carroll racked up 714 yards and seven touchdowns as the

team's second option behind Young. If Aquinas can't replicate the same rushing yards from the backfield, junior quarterback Maxwell Ford might have to contribute a little more through the air than in years past. Ford had 426 passing yards, two touchdowns and four interceptions through eight games last season. Defense should be a strength for Aquinas, however, as the Saints return a strong defensive front led by Jalen Marshall and Sa'o Siavi'i.



## MILL VALLEY AT GARDNER-EDGERTON



Mill Valley is coming off a second straight Class 5A state championship and finished 9-2 last year, but one of those losses came to Gardner-Edgerton, which finished 5-3 overall. The Trailblazers picked up a 28-26 victory over Mill Valley during a Week 3 clash in 2020. Then sophomore running back Conner Elder ran for 96 yards on just five carries and then freshman quarterback Asher Weiner overcame a four-interception game to throw his third touchdown to clinch the win in the fourth quarter. Mill Valley will look to get its offense rolling much better this time around against the Trailblazers, after needing a 95-yard return touchdown on the opening kickoff and an 80-yard rushing score late in the game. The Jaguars return sophomore quarterback Hayden Jay and senior running back Quin Wittenauer, but lost two-time Top 11 lineman Ethan Karter and Top 11 quarterback Cooper Marsh.



## BISHOP MIEGE AT BLUE VALLEY NORTH



This Eastern Kansas League battle will likely be decided on the offensive side of the ball, or maybe on which defense can get the one key stop. Blue Valley North returns much of the offensive firepower that led the Mustangs to a Class 6A state runner-up finish in 2020. Quarterback Henry Martin will return for his senior campaign after throwing 2,961 passing yards and 32 touchdowns last season, earning Top 11 honors. He will also still have his favorite target in Mekhi Miler. The senior wide receiver hauled in 92 receptions on his way to 1,065 receiving yards and 14 touchdown receptions. Miege saw its string of six straight Class 4A state championships end with an overtime loss to St. James Academy in the state semifinals. The Stags graduated All-Class 4A quarterback Timothy Dorsey and a strong senior class, but returns leading rusher Jaylen Burch, who finished with just under 1,000 yards a year ago.



## OLATHE EAST AT LAWRENCE



One team enters this season with a different coach while also replacing a generational talent at running back. The other team has to replace newly every starter from last year's team. New Lawrence head coach Clint Bowen will need to replace their all-state running back Devin Neal. The now Kansas Jayhawk ran for 1,370 yards and 20 rushing touchdowns last season for the Lions, earning Top 11 honors. They will also have to replace quarterback Jackson Dooley, who threw for 1,392 yards and 13 touchdowns. Senior quarterback Truman Juelsgaard will step into his place. Speeder Josh King will try his best to replace Neal at running back. Olathe East comes back from a season where it only lost to Class 5A state champ Mill Valley and Class 6A runner-up Blue Valley North. The Hawks will need to replace eight starters on the offense and seven from the defense though. Senior quarterback Austin Berggren returns as the starter after throwing for just shy of 900 yards. He's also doubles as the team's punter. Senior Kyle Martin will give Berggren a familiar face at wide receiver while center Swade Helton will try to give the Hawks stability on the offensive line.



## COLUMBUS AT FRONTENAC



Frontenac will bring back dual-threat quarterback Collin McCartney. He passed for 1,175 yards and eight touchdowns last year, along with rushing for 637 yards and 13 rushing touchdowns. He'll still have his tailback Mario Menghini as well, who's also productive player in the passing game. He rushed for 466 rushing yards, picked up 604 receiving yards and scored five touchdowns a piece on the ground and through the air. Landon Dean will give McCartney another option in the passing game as a tight end, but is a huge presence on the other side of the ball on a stacked defensive line. The Oklahoma State commit will be joined by Cruz Blair up front, hoping to cause enough disruption to bring down the 20 points per game the team allowed last season. Columbus has its own group of imposing defensive lineman who will be chasing down McCartney. Kody Schalk earned an all-conference selection with his four tackles for loss and two sacks last year. Linebacker Trent Smith will try to clean up any ball carrier that gets by. On offense, Columbus will lean on running back Gabe Martin. The senior picked up 1,244 rushing yards and scored 17 rushing touchdowns in 2020. He also had 41 tackles at linebacker. Columbus knocked off Frontenac in last year's opener on its way to an 8-1 season.



# PITTSBURG COLGAN AT GIRARD



Pittsburg Colgan heads into 2021 hoping to build off a 7-3 campaign that ended with loss in sectionals a season ago. First up, the Pathers will try to flip the result of last year's opener against the CNC League rival as Girard took a 20-12 victory. Colgan returns senior wide receiver Aidan Fleming, who hauled in 10 receptions for 258 yards and three touchdowns. He doubles as a lockdown cornerback and led the team in tackles with 51. Will Glover was next on the list picking up 44 tackles from his linebacker spot. Girard went 4-6 last season, but will have quite the advantage in experience with over 20 upperclassman who got the taste of victory last year over the Panthers. Girard will play the option out of the flex bone which speaks to their nature: physical. Relentless attack on the ground will have Colgan needing to find some third down stops. Ball control will be the name of the game in this one.