

2008 Tournament

Oak Park-River Forest's John

Fodor:

"Being unseeded in the Pepsi Showdown is a bit discouraging, but at the same time motivating. It has encouraged us to work harder in practice and has made us want to be a better team so we can prove them wrong. In the past couple years, OPRF has been ranked pretty well, but we're not them. We work hard together and play for each other. I don't know much about Lane Tech, because I've never seen them play. What I do know is that we challenge ourselves to become mentally and physically stronger so we can challenge any team on the field. If we are confident in ourselves and trust our teammates we can play well."



Lake Zurich's Brady Rein:

"Our team is coming into this season and tournament with high expectations. With each game, we are becoming more of a team and our individual skills are beginning to complement each other well. Last year in the Pepsi Showdown tournament, we were disappointed with a couple of our outcomes. This disappointment has been transferred into a motivation for our team this year. As long as we stay focused each and every game and put forth our best effort, the score will take care of itself. Even though we are coming into this seeded No. 6, we have chosen not to focus on seeding. In our opinion, every opponent will be a challenge and we'll have to come to play. From day one, a team goal of ours was to win this tournament and represent our school well, and we intend to do so."

Oak Park's Jordan Golz:

"After beating St. Pats 7-0 on Monday, the team went into the Lane Tech game extremely confident and excited to upset a team ranked higher than us. Lane Tech was a very good team with many players that one-on-one we had a lot of trouble with, but today the team stepped up together and we played out of our minds. We worried about what we could control, and that is how we approach and

handle the game, and we played 120 percent for 80 straight minutes. Today was the first true test for us since our first game against Larkin, and the outcomes were completely different, showing how far we've come. In the last few weeks we have grown as a team on and off the field. Today, we had great leadership from the back through our sweeper Sam Fodor. He controlled the defense today better than anybody I have ever seen. Vidar Durazo got us off to a great start with an incredible shot only a minute or two into the game that determined the final score. Today was a perfect example of a complete team effort. Everybody did everything they could do for the success of the team and that is why we came out on top today. If we play like we did today on Thursday and in future games, it is going to be very tough to beat us. If a team does beat us, they will not go off the field thinking the game was a blowout. We have shown OPRF never has a regrouping year; we reload. Today we proved that we are capable to do some damage, and I am looking forward to seeing how we bring this momentum into Thursday's game."

Geneva's Peter Wensel:

"Perhaps my favorite metaphor for describing the fluidity and teamwork that the organism battling for supremacy on a grassy field. Each player represents a unique cell contributing the "organism's" ultimate goal of conquest. If there's one bad cell and the organism ceases to function and dies. (i.e. the team loses) The game today almost ended up with the complete moral collapse late in the first half, even though our team was up two goals, but by refocusing our efforts during the half, we were able to put away four more goals with each resulting in personal and team wide satisfaction. It is a beautiful thing when the battle for survival of the fittest is won."

Parker's Tommy Rosenbluth:

"As a senior it is good to finally reach the goal of being in a major tournament. The Pepsi Showdown is something Francis Parker School is proud and excited to be a part of. Coming off a fourth place finish in state last year, it's an honor to go head to head with teams from different soccer levels and put our hard work and success against theirs. Our school is small compared to most in the tournament and we only have about 300 students in our high school. We know we are going to be facing some of the best teams in Illinois, but are glad to be given the opportunity and chance to test our strength and might. The first game we had was against Maine South and they beat us 7-0. But the result didn't reflect the game and we should do better through out the rest of the tournament. I'm glad that myself and the other seniors that make up the Francis Parker soccer team have finally reached a higher level of soccer and can help contribute to the trend of Parker success. Lastly, in playing soccer with teams of this caliber it will help prepare us for our own conference so that we will have already played teams that prepared us to play well mentally and physically."

Entry #2

After settling into the tournament and finally gaining some experience, the Francis Parker soccer team looked sharp in going up against Lakeview High School. The game was really close for the most part, tied at 1-1, but a break down in our defense led to a cross and a great header from around the penalty kick spot that hit the back of the net. Instead of getting discouraged we played even harder having some chances to tie. Though we came out of the game with a lost, we left happy because we knew we played well and hard. The next game was against Whitney Young after our game against Timothy Christian was cancelled due to rain. This was the first game we had played on a big turf field and having just started our season in terms of conference games adapted pretty well. We started off

with a 2-0 lead in the first half but Whitney Young scored 2 in the second half to tie the game. We're an unseeded team in this tournament but we've definitely played as hard as the rest of the teams here and I think the result against Whitney Young and Lakeview proves that.

Maine South's Piotr Kikolski:

"The Maine South vs. Francis Parker was a good game. Despite the loss for Francis Parker, they played a good game. They gave Maine South a couple of attacks on offense and they hit the post on one play in the second half. Maine South would like to thank Francis Parker for coming out and playing them and wish them good luck for the rest of their season. The team is excited for the next game against Lake Zurich. We know they are good and it will be a good game to watch and play. Even though the final game at Toyota Park seems far away the team is excited about being one game closer to that experience."

Schaumburg's Josh Beard:

"The competition in the tournament thus far is rather tough. Bolingbrook was talented and gave us a tough fight. I expect much from us in this tournament and hopefully we can come away with some big wins. The teams we look to be playing next are both good teams and will give us a great match in the days to come. The Pepsi tournament is really something that I have been looking forward to all season. It is a great opportunity to see what our team is capable of achieving. Although the teams have been ranked I really think that the level of competition is very challenging and that no team should be overlooked. As for right now our team's focus is on Streamwood, a very tough and talented team."

Lakeview's Faruk Jasaragic:

I am very happy that my team was invited to the Pepsi Showdown. We knew that this was the biggest tournament in the Midwest area and we were pleased to be part of it.

Our first game was against Lake Zurich, a 6th ranked team in the area. We were expecting a lot because we knew what it means to be highly ranked and talked about.

When the game started I was a little surprised because the intensity that Lake Zurich was showing was not what we had expected. I felt as if we could have scored in the first 10 minutes. We were pressing from the start and getting great opportunities but we could not finish. After conceding the first goal, we knew if we didn't cover their big guys, we would get scored on again. Some problems we had was not covering the person we were told to mark. That is where they had a lot of great through balls and they pressured our defense and had great opportunities on the goal. We weren't sure how to adapt to the game they were playing, but as the game went on, we got into a momentum and started to attack. It was an exciting game for me and my teammates.

Playing against a 6th ranked team in the state was an honor and we only knew we could get better. Our players did a great job on the field. Our defenders Edgar, Victor and Eligio were under a lot of pressure throughout the game but they played hard and gave it their all. Nazar did a great job as well, distributing the ball and challenging their players. Julian and I played a good role on the wings distributing and taking the ball down the line. Elvedin and Oscar did a great job in the mid, holding off players and fighting hard for the ball. Our forwards Ruben Angel played fantastic pressing and getting shots on goal. This was a great experience and we can't wait to get back in it.

Entry #2

After our loss in our first Pepsi Showdown game, we knew we had to come out with a win in the upcoming game. Lakeview faced Francis Parker in the second Pepsi Showdown game. We had done

some research the night before and knew they had placed 4th in the state last year, so we felt this was the time to step up. Before the game our coach had told us to control the game and possess the ball. We had to play more of 1-2 passing and he wanted us to have a minimum of three touches. The game started off good for us in the beginning. We were pressuring and attacking their defense and we had opportunities that needed to be scored. I heard my coaches, Coach Rodriguez and Coach Fusco trying to remind us what they had told us to do from the sideline, but we were caught up on playing the way we wanted and not how they told us. We were crossing balls in the air and not playing it on the ground which was our kind of game. Our first goal came from Angel, he was determined to score and he did. At half our coaches were really upset but we had to go out there and finish the game. Parker ended up tying the game at 1-1, but later on, I took the ball to the side and made a cross, were Ruben headed the ball in the goal.

Lincoln-Way East's Rob McGowan:

"After coming off of a losing season last year, our team this year has the talent and chemistry to be great. The Pepsi Showdown, we figured, would be our proving ground. We knew the game against Wheaton Academy that we were going to play in the first round was going to be tough. All teams are playing for the championship at Toyota Park, and that was where we thought we would see ourselves. The whole game was a battle, they got the first goal, but we scored back in the second half. The game in one word was physical. A few yellow cards later they got the game winning goal. Although our team was disappointed, we knew we did some things that we liked, and things we could improve on. Like they say, you learn more from a loss than you do from a win and I think that loss can be the turning point of our season. We took what we learned from the loss and though we were knocked out of the championship, we didn't lose hope. We went on to win our next game against Providence 5-0. Looking back on the game there was an all-around good team effort. But Alex Cernak was the guy on our team that really stepped up and we hope that he and the rest of our team can keep up the effort. Now although we believe we are under-rated and we hope to be pinned against other good teams for the rest of the Pepsi Showdown, because we know we can play with anyone."

Wheaton Academy's Kyle Pilcher:

"When we started training nearly six months ago, every player had it in his mind that we could shake up this year's Pepsi Showdown tournament. Every game scheduled for us in this tournament we have starred on our calendars due to our respect for the high caliber teams, players and coaches that we will encounter in the upcoming weeks. It is our goal to be stronger together as we represent Wheaton Academy in the Showdown this year. This year we want to try and make a run in the Pepsi Showdown as we play against some of the best competition in the state."

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Wheaton South's Scott Filarski:

"So another year is off and running. Most of the guys have been anxiously awaiting to get back at this tournament. Being defending champions, we knew that there was some added pressure in that every

other team would be gunning for us. We simply concentrated on what we would have to do and not let outside opinions affect our performance. This tournament means a great deal to us so we are going to come to play on every occasion. I'm Nick Fuson captain of and writing on behalf of Wheaton Warrenville South High School. On Tuesday we opened up against Plainfield Central. We didn't know much about the side other than they played Nequa very well in the regular season. Plainfield came out tough, and gave us quite a game. The last ten minutes saw a total three goals two by them and one by us. The game ended with a South Victory but Plainfield Central played tough and provided for some extremely exciting soccer at the tail end of the game. Notching our first win of the tournament this year, we moved on to face Andrew in our next match. After about an hour long delay due to not having any refs show up, we finally got underway. For about the first ten minutes of the game we came out pretty well. We were moving the ball and putting together some nice offensive combinations. However about ten minutes into the game we had a defensive lapse allowing them to follow up a shot our keeper had saved, and thus tallying the games first score. They then followed that goal with a more admirable finish off a corner kick. Our guys were frustrated and we lost our focus a bit. We suffered yet another set back when one of keystone players from the middle of the field was sent off on a straight red. Andrew notched a third goal before the half was over and we retreated to our side to regroup. We came out down three goals, and a man in the second half, a daunting task to say the least. The boys that were able to play gave it there all and showed a great deal of pride out there. Perhaps if we were not in such a hole the final may have ended differently, however, we ended up dropping the contest 3-0 to a skillful Andrew squad. We were looking forward to getting back to play today September 13th, but due to the poor weather as you all know the game was cancelled. Our next game for the tournament is Thursday, and we are anxiously waiting for the chance to prove ourselves in another test. till next time, so long."

Lyons Township's Chris Meingast:

Our team has always looked at the Pepsi Showdown as a place to prove ourselves early on in the season, and this year isn't any different. The tournament has started off well for us, and we're looking to continue improving individually and as a team to advance to the finals at Toyota Park. Last year we lost in penalty kicks at our home fields, and that has been used as motivation for us to play as hard as we can for as long as we can. This tournament has always been extremely competitive, and this year we found ourselves in some of the hardest opening games we've ever played, but we continue to mold as a team and improve the way we play. Our concentration now is focused on getting back out on the field and gearing up for our next game against a tough Larkin team.

Downers Grove North's Ryan Gorecki:

The Pepsi Showdown has been a highlight of every varsity soccer season at Downers North. At this tournament, we get to see where we stand compared to other competitive teams in our area. It is always an enjoyable event because we get to play teams that are outside our conference and would have otherwise never heard of, let alone played. For North's varsity team, we have used this tournament as not only an opportunity to play new teams and see how we stand, but also as a good lead into the season. We start off right away playing quality teams and it really helps us get into the groove and understand the level of competition that is around. By being part of this tournament every year, North's program becomes more and more competitive. Plus, we always get to go to a Chicago Fire game at the end of the tournament. We can't wait until it is our team who gets to play at Toyota Park.

Timothy Christian's Josh Hjelmgren:

"Mount Carmel showed a lot of class and determination in the first round of the tournament against us. Both teams came into the tournament with high expectations and a lot of energy. In the first half Mount Carmel scored two unanswered goals. After the second half Dave Kuenzi scored on a cross from Jake Schemper to change the score to 2-1. Mount Carmel didn't give in though and scored on a pk to put the score at 3-1. With ten minutes left Jeb Nash scored to make the score 3-2. After that Timothy and Mount Carmel had many chances but none of them were finished. This game was played with a lot of energy and aggressiveness, something you'd expect in the Pepsi Showdown."

Wheaton Warrenville South's Captain Nick Fuson:

After an exciting week of play the tigers were excited to get back to the showdown and continue building upon our season. We were set to face off against Streamwood who we knew were going to be a tough side. This game had many implications for us in that the sectional meeting is coming up. A win for us in the next two games would do volumes for our placement. After waiting about an hour to play we came out and opened up the scoring. Streamwood was always right there with super fast play out of the mid field. They ended going ahead 2-1 early in the second half but we battled back to level mid way through. The rest of the match was played end to end and unfortunately we had a break down in which they capitalized on. It was a great game, and look forward to our contest on Friday.