



# 2021 NMAA State Football Championships

## Gateway Christian wins 2021 6-Man Title

The Gateway Christian Warriors (10-0) defeated the Ramah Mustangs (8-2) in the 2021 NMAA 6-Man State Football Championship, 70-28, making the schools fourth 6-man title in school history. It was also the first blue trophy for the Warriors since 2013 and the seventh state title in the sport of football for the school.

The Warriors never trailed in the contest, holding an 18-6 lead after the first quarter of play and a 44-14 advantage going into the locker room at the half. Ramah, however, played much better football in the last two quarters of play, hold Gateway Christian to just 26 points total, while keeping pace with 14 points of their own.

In the end, however, Gateway Christian was just two much for Ramah and held on for a dominant, 70-28 victory.



## Tatum Wins Wild 8-Man Football Championship

The 2021 NMAA 8-Man Football Championship game pitted the No. 1 and No. 2 teams in the state, as the Tatum Coyotes (9-1) squared off against the Melrose Buffaloes (7-3). The Coyotes won the game in overtime, 22-14, marking the school's seventh blue trophy and the first since 2018.

This wasn't your typical 8-Man football game, however, with both teams exchanging touchdowns all game long. No, this was a defensive battle all night. Melrose got on the scoreboard first and lead 8-0 after the first quarter of play. It look as if the Buffaloes would carry that lead into halftime but a late second quarter score by Tatum, tied the game at 8-8 going into the half.

Melrose again took the lead in the third quarter, but a failed 2-point conversion made it 14-8. Tatum tied the with under a minute to go in the fourth quarter with chance to take the lead but their 2-point



conversion was also no good and the two teams headed to overtime.

The Coyotes had the ball first in overtime and made short work of their possession, scoring in just three plays. This time though, the 2-point try was successful, making it 22-14.

Melrose had a chance to tie but a failed fourth down pass was deflected, giving Tatum the victory in dramatic fashion, 22-14, at the 2021 NMAA 8-Man State Football Championship.

### **Eunice Captures 16th Blue Trophy**

Just 23 miles separates the towns of Eunice and Jal, and for the first time since 1977, these two schools met for the 2A Football Championship on the line. The Eunice Cardinals (9-3) got the better of the Jal Panthers (10-2) in the 2021 Class 2A State Football Championship, 28-15, marking it the 16th football title for the Cardinals in school history.

Over 2,000 fans turned out for this old rivalry and both teams did not disappoint. Jal started the game with the ball and marched down the field for the game's first score, taking a 7-0 lead. Eunice answered with a touchdown of their own, tying the game at 7-7.

The Cardinals added another score, right before the half, taking a 14-7 advantage into the locker room at the half. In the third quarter, the defense for both teams tightened down, as the score remained the same after three quarters of play.

Then, just five seconds into the fourth quarter, Eunice scored on a 12-yard run up the middle to take a 21-7 lead. The Cardinals added an insurance touchdown with just under five minutes to play in the game, making it 28-7.

The Panthers did find the endzone one last time on a deep pass to the corner of the endzone to pull within 13 points at 28-15 but there was not enough time to mount a comeback, as the Eunice Cardinals took the 2021 State 2A Football Championship, 28-15.



### **Robertson Wins the 2021 3A State Football Title**

The 2021 Class 3A State Football Championship game matched district rivals against one another, Robertson and St. Michael's. The Cardinals had come up empty in their previous four trips to the state final, but this year was different. Robertson (11-2) never trailed in beating the Horsemen 28-7.

After a scoreless first quarter, Robertson finally found the endzone just before half-time when Matthew Gonzales scored his first of three touchdowns on the game on a 47-yard run. The Cardinals took a 6-0 lead into halftime and built it up to 12-0 on a second Gonzales touchdown, this one from 22 yards out. Robertson running back Jesse James scored on a 6-ayrd run in the fourth quarter and a two-point conversion gave the Cardinals a 20-0 lead.



St. Michael's (9-4) got on the board with a 60-yard touchdown pass from Zachary Martinez to Devin Flores, but Robertson would add one more score in the final quarter on a 73-yard touchdown run by Gonzales. The senior quarterback finished with 192 rushing yards and three interceptions to go along with his trifecta of scores. The Robertson defense finished with five interceptions on the day.

The state title is Robertson's first since 2013 and fourth championship overall.

### **Lovington Hoists 4A State Football Blue Trophy**

It's more blue for the blue in 2021. The Lovington Wildcats lifted the blue championship trophy in beating Ruidoso 41-21 to win the Class 4A State Football Title game. The 6th seeded Warriors (8-6) jumped out to an early 13-0 lead, but the Wildcats (10-3) were not rattled on their home blue turf. Lovington scored three touchdowns of their own to take a 21-13 lead into halftime.

"That first score, when we finally got into the endzone, lit a match and it just kept burning," said Lovington head coach Anthony Gonzales. "I would have liked to start a different way, but I was proud of how they finished."

The top seeded Wildcats built up a 15-point lead with 7:20 to play in the third quarter as part of their run of 28-straight points. Ruidoso cut the deficit to 28-21 late in the third quarter, but Lovington took a two-touchdown lead in the final quarter.

Lovington junior quarterback Ashton Aranda rushed for two touchdowns and threw three more scores in the win. It's Lovington's first state title since 2011.



## Los Lunas Wins First State Football Title

The Los Lunas Tigers (13-0) captured their first state football championship with a 40-28 win over the Artesia Bulldogs (9-4).

The Tigers took control of the game early, jumping out to a 20-7 lead after the first quarter of play. In the second quarter, defense was the focus, as neither team could find the endzone, as the score remained 20-7 going in the locker room at the half.



Artesia pulled to within seven points at 21-14, early in the third but Los Lunas added six points to maintain the double-digit lead at 26-14 at the end of the third quarter.

The two teams exchanged touchdown for touchdown during the fourth quarter, as the 12-point lead by the Tigers was too much for the Bulldogs to overcome in the end. When the clock hit zero, it was the Los Lunas Tigers hoisting their first blue trophy in the sport of football.

## Cleveland Wins 4th Football Title

The Cleveland Storm capped off a perfect 13-0 season in the 2021 NMAA Class 6A State Football Championship game, with a 35-14 victory over in-town rival the Rio Rancho Rams (9-2). This was the fourth football title for the Storm and the third in six years.

Cleveland's game plan from the start was to run the ball, as running back Josh Perry lead the way for the Storm with three touchdowns in the game.

The Storm jumped out to a surprising 21-0 lead in the first quarter, and it looked as if Cleveland was in control of the game. However, the Rams would not go down so easily. Rio Rancho returned a kickoff for the touchdown and scored again late in the second quarter to pull within seven at 21-14, going into halftime.

Cleveland extended their lead in the third quarter to 28-14 and added another score in the fourth to put the game out of reach, as the Storm hoisted the blue trophy for the fourth time in school history.

