



2019 State Basketball Championships



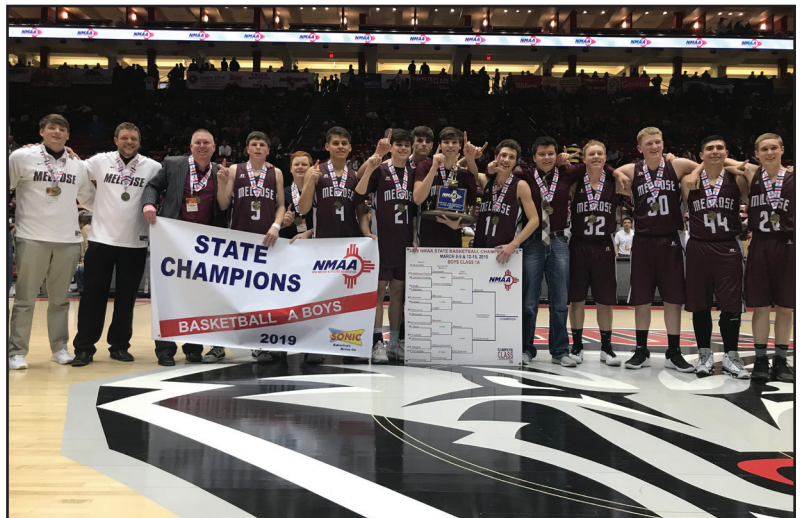
Melrose Wins Championship For Second Straight Year

"We lost 5 or 6 seniors last year that did most of the playing time for us and if you would have told me we'd be in this position this year I would have told you 'you're crazy,'" said Melrose head coach Kevin Lackey following another championship run. Melrose (25-7) beat Ft. Sumner 54-50 in the Class 1A Boys Championship. It was the fourth time the two schools faced each other this season. All of the previous three meetings were decided by five points or less, so this one was bound to go down to the wire.

Melrose jumped out to a 10-4 lead in the first quarter and went up 28-19 at halftime. Ft. Sumner (23-9) came down the ramp after the break and went on a 17-9 run to get within one, but they could never take the lead. Melrose sealed the deal in the fourth and final quarter, outscoring Ft. Sumner 17-14 over the final eight minutes for the 54-50 final total.

Melrose won the battle of the boards with a dominating 62-45 rebounding advantage. The Buffaloes had three players in double figures led by Dylan Valentine with 15 points. Tate Sorgen added 12 points and Tristan Sena finished with 10.

"These guys battled and they got better and better," said Lackey. "We preach peaking at the right time and growing up at the right time. It was all heart, I'm super proud of them."



It's 3 Straight For Pecos

For the third year in a row, the Pecos Panthers walked off the court at Dreamstyle Arena The Pit carrying the blue trophy. Pecos (26-3) beat Newcomb (29-2) in the Class 2A Championship game, 58-37. The Panthers led wire-to-wire after racing out to a 16-9 lead in the opening quarter. Pecos held an 11-point lead at halftime and put up 31 points in the final two quarters. The Panthers defense proved to take its toll on the Skyhawks, as Newcomb went 2-24 from three-point range. The fast-paced style of play by Pecos wore down their opponent as the Panthers scored almost half of their points (26) on the fast break. The Panthers had two players in double figures led by Xavier Padilla with 22 points. Ismael Villegas added a double-double with 12 points and 11 rebounds.

"What a great bunch of guys," said head coach Ira Harge Jr. "It started this past summer, we weren't quite sure how they would react or respond after losing those seven seniors last year and they really stepped up and did a great job. I'm so proud of these guys. They did it for their community and everybody in Pecos."



Hot Springs Wins 1st State Title in 26 Years

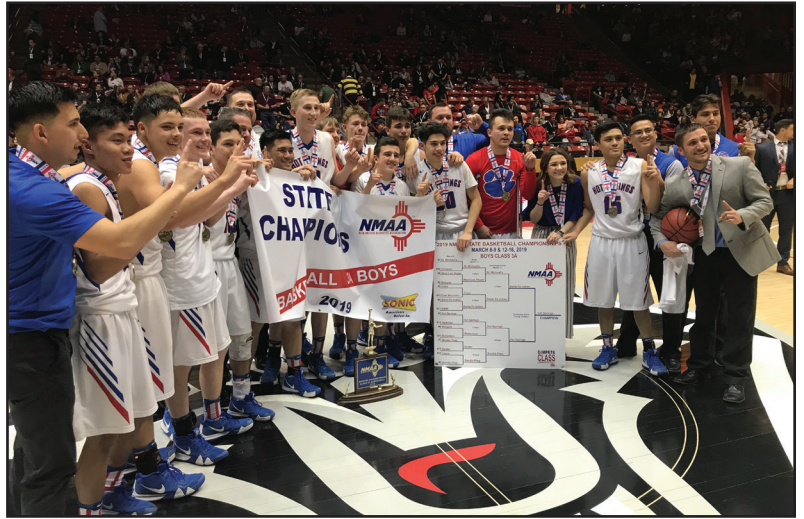
For the first time since 1993, Hot Springs High School lifted the blue trophy at center court. The Tigers (27-4) beat Santa Fe Indian School 56-54 in a thrilling overtime finish for the Class 3A Championship.

It appeared to take Hot Springs a few minutes to shake off the nerves as SFIS (20-12) scored the first 6 points of the game. The Tigers trailed the entire first quarter. Hot Springs fell behind by as many as 14 points in the second quarter and headed to halftime down by 10.

The third quarter is when the momentum started to shift. The Tigers went on a 10-2 run and took their first lead of the day when a Verrels Lukman three-pointer made it 33-32. Hot Springs held SFIS to just 8 points in the third quarter. There were eight lead changes or ties in the fourth quarter alone and the two teams headed to overtime tied at 47.

After giving up the first point of overtime, Hot Springs would go on top 49-48 with a Tino Luna basket. SFIS tied the game at 49, but then the Tigers took the lead for good with a bucket by Coltin Whitehead at the 2:25 mark of OT. Some key free throws by the Tigers would allow them to hold on and win 56-54 in overtime. Lukman led Hot Springs with 17 points and Whitehead scored 11.

Second-year head coach Derek Bean was extremely proud of his group. "Sometimes it may take a few motivational words and it gets their motor running, but they never quit," he said. "Trust the process, put 'we' over 'me' and fall in love with defense. That's what they did. Defense won the ballgame today. We got down early, but we've been there before. We just had to believe in what we were doing. They don't give up. They don't know how. They just kept fighting, that's what I love the most about them."



Vikings Upset #1 Seed to Claim The Blue Trophy

The Valley Vikings entered the 2019 State Basketball Tournament with a .500 record. The Vikings earned a #7 seed in the bracket, but they proceeded to take down #1 and #2 on their way to winning the Class 4A Championship. Valley (17-13) beat #1 Los Lunas in the title game, 37-34.

The Vikings knocked off seven-time state champ Hope Christian in the quarterfinals and had to face a Tigers squad in the championship that was on an 18-game win streak. Valley scored the first two baskets of the game and only trailed in the opening half twice. A three pointer by Seyi Oyeku in the closing minutes of the second quarter put Valley up 20-15. They would take a three-point lead into halftime.

In the third quarter, the Vikings fell behind by five after a furious run by Los Lunas (27-4). Valley went into the fourth quarter down by two. The Vikings held Los Lunas to just five points in the fourth quarter and it was a race to the finish line in the final minutes. Jevon Baker gave Valley a 33-32 lead with 2:09 to play. Los Lunas regained the lead on an AJ Garcia basket 30 seconds later. Oyeku gave the Vikings the go-ahead score with 1:22 to go in the game. A couple free throws by Derick Chavez in the closing seconds would seal the deal for the Vikings as they went on to win by a final count of 37-34. Oyeku led the winners with



a game-high 19 points.

"These guys played so hard," said Valley head coach Joe Coleman. "From the start of the state tourney on against Highland, they learned how to fight and they stuck together. I'm so happy for these kids."

Back-to-Back Titles for Atrisco Heritage

In front of an estimated 14,000 fans at Dreamstyle Arena-the Pit, the Atrisco Heritage and Santa Fe basketball teams put on a thrilling show in the Class 5A Championship game. When the final buzzer sounded, the Jaguars (21-7) won the blue trophy for the second straight season by a final score of 61-58.

Dominic Rivas scored 12 of Atrisco's 16 points in the opening quarter, all from 3-point range. The Jaguars led 16-12 after the first quarter. For the remaining three quarters the two teams went bucket for bucket. Atrisco Heritage led 31-29 at halftime and 42-40 after three quarters. In the fourth quarter, there were six different lead changes. The blue trophy was still up for grabs in the final 8 minutes. Carlos Dassaro's three pointer to start the final quarter gave Santa Fe (24-7) a 43-42 lead. Atrisco's Isaiah Brooks gave the Jags a 45-43 lead with a three of his own the next time down the floor. Brooks put up 10 of his 11 points in the final quarter. A pair of free throws by Santa Fe's Antonio Lovato put the Demons on top 54-53 with 2:30 to play, but Jozyah Ramos drained two free throws at the 1:53 mark to give Atrisco Heritage the lead for good. Solid free throw shooting down the stretch allowed Atrisco Heritage to win the championship for a second straight year 61-58. Ramos finished with a game-high 22 points and Rivas ended the night with 18.

"Atrisco Heritage is a blue-collar school," explained head coach Adrian Ortega. "They work hard and put up with my hard coaching every year and this is well deserved. I will tell you this, we're not done either."



Tatum's Back On Top of the Basketball World

The Tatum Coyotes finished the 2019 season as state champions for the second time in three years. Tatum (28-4) beat Melrose in the Class 1A title game by a final score of 57-48.

Melrose controlled most of the first half leading by as many as seven. Tatum trailed 26-20 at the break. The third quarter proved to be the difference in this one. Melrose (24-7) built up their lead to 10 points, however Tatum finished the quarter on an 18-2 run and took a 38-34 lead into the final quarter. The Coyotes wouldn't give up the lead in the fourth with Melrose getting no closer than three points, as Tatum won the game 57-48.

The Coyotes stayed in the ballgame by going 34-42 (81%) from the free throw line. Celeste Jimenez led Tatum with 21 points, 14 of those coming from the charity stripe.

"I think maybe we had some nerves," explained Tatum head coach Vince Homer about their slow start. "We didn't hit some shots that we characteristically knock down, but all year long I've been reminding these ladies to trust what we do and continue to lean on each other and take care of each other. Do the things that we can control, guard, rebound, play really, really, hard, and I am blessed and honored to coach a group of extremely talented and hard-working young ladies and we trusted on what we did."



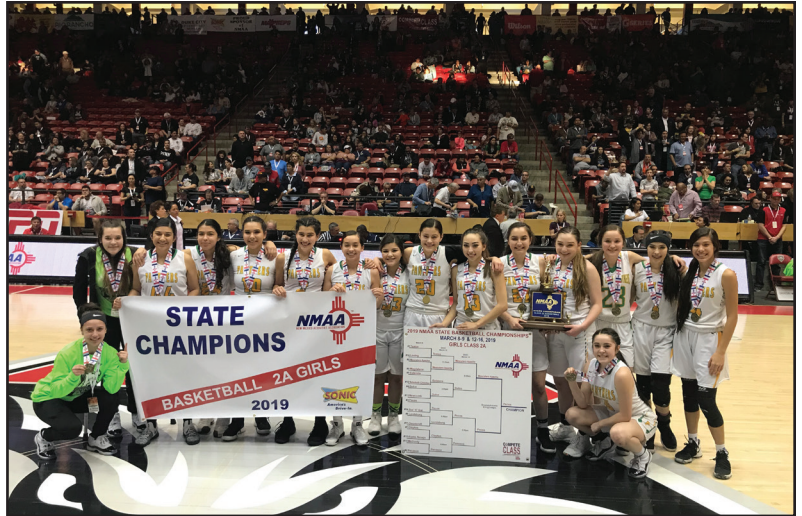
Pecos Panthers Make History With 1st Title

Pecos High School needed a little extra time to win their school's first girls basketball title. The Panthers (23-6) beat Mescalero Apache 53-46 in overtime of the Class 2A Championship. It was a battle of two former Santa Fe High School coaches as Ron Drake, now with Pecos, went up against Elmer Chavez.

After a low-scoring first quarter with Mescalero (23-8) leading 7-6, both teams went shot-for-shot in the second quarter as the two teams were tied 18-18 at halftime. Mescalero had a one-point lead heading into the fourth quarter where the two teams went shot for shot. The drama reached a high intensity in the final :30 seconds of regulation. Samantha Kazhe gave Mescalero a one-point lead with :25 remaining. Brittany Martinez then hit a pair of free throws to give Pecos a one-point lead (37-36) with :17 left. Another Pecos free throw by Faith Flores would put the Panthers up 38-36 with :06 left. As the clock ticked down, Mescalero freshman Pearl Pike banked in a shot down low and was fouled as time expired. Pike missed the free throw, sending the game into overtime.

In the extra four minutes, Pecos outscored Mescalero 15-8 to give the third seeded Panthers the blue trophy. Brittany Martinez led the champs with 22 points.

"It means so much for Pecos and the community," said Drake after the win. "It was a great run and they worked so hard."



Robertson Wins Their 1st Ever Girls Basketball Title

Robertson High School won the school's first girls basketball title in beating Santa Fe Indian School 62-46 for the Class 3A Championship. It was a #1 vs #2 showdown as the top seeded Cardinals (29-2) faced SFIS (27-5) for the fifth time this season. Robertson had already beaten SFIS three of the previous four meetings.

The first quarter was a back-and-forth battle between the two as Robertson took a 14-10 lead into the second quarter. In the next eight minutes, Robertson put together an 18-5 run to give the Cardinals a 17-point lead at half-time. SFIS went shot for shot in the second half, but Robertson's lead was too big to overcome. The top seed was up 48-32 after three quarters and finished with a 62-46 advantage.

Alianza Darley was dominant down low with 27 points and 9 rebounds. Robertson's Tessa Ortiz and Jazmyne Jenkins each added 12 points.

Head coach Jose Medina preached the three E's to his team all season: energy, effort, execution. "We added one this week for the state tournament, emotion," added Medina. "Our seniors did a great job of leading us tonight, making things happen," said Medina. "They executed and played what we preach from the jump ball to the final buzzer."



Back-To-Back Titles for the Tigers

Los Lunas ended the 2019 season the same way they finished the 2018 campaign, holding the blue trophy. The Tigers (28-3) beat top seed Kirtland Central 49-43 in the Class 4A Championship. It was a #1 vs #2 showdown as the top seeded Lady Broncos had beaten the Tigers already once this season.

The first quarter was a close contest as Kirtland (27-4) took an early 12-10 lead. The Tigers regained the lead when Natalie Jojola hit a three with 5:35 before halftime and Los Lunas wouldn't trail the rest of the night. Jojola hit four shots on the game, all of them three pointers for her 12-point effort. Her teammate Mia Guest had 3 triples of her own as part of her game-high 15 points.

It was the second and third quarters that made the difference in this one as the Tigers outscored the Broncos 28-16 during that stretch. Los Lunas held on in the fourth quarter for their 49-43 victory.

Los Lunas locked down a Kirtland squad that was used to putting up points all year. Kirtland was 4-18 from three-point range and the Tigers held Kirtland's Tatelyn Manheimer, who had 29 points in the previous two games, to just three points on night. "We work on identifying shooters and it paid off," said head coach Marty Zeller. It the fourth state title in seven years for Los Lunas and Zeller.



West Mesa Wins School's 1st Girls Basketball Title

Never give up. That's the message you can take away from the 2019 Class 5A Championship game. The West Mesa Mustangs survived a 21-0 run by the #1 team in the state and claimed their first blue trophy by beating Hobbs in the title game 63-51.

The Mustangs (28-3) started the game strong taking a 10-5 lead following a Cece Barela three-pointer five minutes into the game. Then Hobbs (29-3) went on a 21-0 run to give the Eagles a 26-10 cushion with about 5 minutes before the half. The Mustangs trailed 32-27 at the break.

"We knew they were going to go on some runs and we were going to make some runs," explained West Mesa head coach Manny Otero. "Our girls were resilient and kept their composure and we have to give them credit for hanging in there and toughing out Hobbs' best blow and we kept going."

West Mesa climbed back into it in the third quarter. The Mustangs outscored the Eagles 16-10 during the eight-minute stretch and led 43-42 heading into the final quarter. Maiah Rivas scored five straight points in the fourth to give West Mesa the insurance they needed for their 63-51 win and first state title.

"Any score that we were down, I had faith in our girls that they could come back," said Otero. "We're happy to take the blue trophy back to the west side."

