



# 2017 State Football Championships

## Animas Claims 6-Man Football Championship

On this Saturday in early November, both the Panthers and Mountaineers had prepared for a matchup that began decades ago. Each team's roster for this year's contest included players whose fathers were on championship teams from each school in the 80's and 90's, but it's been a long time for either team to have the shot at the championship.

The Reserve Mountaineers entered the contest with a record of 7-1, their only loss during regular season play came against their opponent in this championship contest. Animas came in undefeated with a record of 8-0.

Animas found the endzone first with a touchdown pass to Ty Wagley to take an 8-0 lead in the opening quarter. The Mountaineers followed with a TD pass to Billy Baca, but missed the extra point attempt, leaving the score at 8-6. Animas added to their first quarter lead scoring an additional touchdown before the end of the quarter on a pass to Jaiden Ybarra making the score to 14-6 after a missed extra point.

Second quarter action included a touchdown run by Tell Swift of Animas. The Mountaineers responded quickly with a drive that included a 28-yard TD pass from Reserve quarterback Brenden Goetz to Isiac Johnston with an extra point to take the score to 22-13. Reserve scored an additional rushing touchdown by Udell Nelson and extra point from Ben Fletcher bringing the score to 22-20 with just over one-minute remaining in the first half. Just before the break, the Panthers quickly scored on a passing touchdown from Brian Garcia to Orin Offutt bringing the score to 28-20.

Coming out of the locker room, Animas put points on the board first with a two-point safety by Ty Wagley taking the score to 30-20. Still in the third, the Panthers punched in another score from Wagley bringing the score to 36-20.

The Panthers efficiently took the ball down the field in the fourth, with Tell Swift scoring on a 27-yard run. The extra point conversion was missed and the score stood at 42-20 with 5:33 remaining on the clock. The scoring wasn't over. The Panthers added another TD with a 35-yard pass to Jimmy Moreno. The extra point was unsuccessful, leaving the score at 48-20 with 4:27 on the clock. Reserve was able to put 2 more points on the board with a late safety by Ben Fletcher, but that wasn't enough to tip the scales.

With a final score of 48-22, Animas received their 8th NMAA State Championship Trophy.



## Melrose wins Fourth Straight 8-Man Title

The Melrose Buffaloes (11-0) won their fourth straight 8-man football crown with a 76-24 win over the Mountainair Mustangs (9-2) in the 2017 NMAA State 8-Man Football Championship game. It was a rematch from the 2010 title game, which Melrose won 22-20.

This was the 12th state title for the Buffaloes in football, as Melrose was the only defending champion from 2016 to repeat in 2017.

The Mustangs opened the game with a 10-yard touchdown run by quarterback Amador Brazil with 10:20 left in the first quarter. Following a successful 2-point conversion, Mountainair held an early 8-0 lead. The Buffaloes did respond with a touchdown on their first possession of the game, a 30-yard touchdown run from quarterback Sterling Sena with 9:45 remaining in the first. The 2-point conversion was no good and Mountainair maintained a two-point lead at 8-6.

The Mustangs extended their lead to 10 on a 39-yard touchdown pass from Brazil to Andrew Lopez with just under four minutes to play in the first quarter. The 2-point conversion was good, giving Mountainair the lead at 16-6. Just 23 seconds later, however, Melrose answered with a touchdown pass of their own, a 72-yard bomb from Sena to Logan Devaney. This time, the 2-point conversion was good and Melrose pulled to within 2-points at 16-14 to end the first quarter of play.

As the second quarter began, it looked as if Melrose might have one of their toughest challenges of the year, as the Mustangs were toe-to-toe with the Buffaloes.

However, the time defending champions turned up the pressure in the second quarter, forcing Mountainair to punt on all four of their possessions, while scoring 32 unanswered points. The first touchdown was a 64-yard pass from Sena to Carson Frazee, followed by a 15-yard pass from Sena to Hunter Sorgen, making it 30-16 with 4:20 left in the half. After the Buffaloes' defense forced another punt, Frazee scored his second touchdown of the quarter on a 31-yard run, giving Melrose a 38-16 lead with 1:39 to go in the half.

Mountainair was forced to punt once again with just seconds to go before the midway point but muffed the snap giving Melrose excellent field position and a chance to add to their lead. Then, with three seconds on the clock, Sena hit Frazee on a 24-yard touchdown pass, making it 46-16 at the break.

Melrose started the third quarter with the ball, as Mountainair looked to make something happen on defense and get back in the game. A fumble by Melrose is exactly what the Mustangs were hoping for as they took over with great field position. However, Mountainair could not capitalize and were forced to punt. Tristan Sena then scored on a 6-yard run with 5:48 to go in the third to extend the Buffaloes' lead to 54-16.

Melrose added to their lead midway through the fourth quarter on a 19-yard touchdown pass from Sena to Frazee with 6:54 left in the game, making it 62-16. The Mustangs responded with a 51-yard touchdown run by Chandler Roberts to pull the score to 62-24 with 6:02 remaining in the contest. On the ensuing kickoff, Frazee returned the ball 85 yards for a touchdown, his fifth of the game to give Melrose a 70-24 lead with 5:47 to go in the game. The Buffaloes added one more score just minutes later to end the game at 76-24, capturing their fourth 8-Man title in a row and the 12th in school history.



## Ft. Sumner/House Captures Class 2A Football Title

The U.S. Bank Class 2A Football State Championship saw the #1 Ft. Sumner/House Foxes hosting the #2 Escalante Lobos on Saturday, November 11, 2017 in Ft. Sumner, NM.

Escalante received the opening kickoff and the Foxes defense held the Lobos to a three-and-out. Ft. Sumner/House started their opening drive on their own 38-yard line. On fourth down, the Foxes extended their drive on a fake punt with 9:20 to go in the opening quarter. Quarterback Jude Segura completed a 25-yard touchdown pass to Peyton Lewis to put the Foxes up 7-0 with 7:50 to go in the quarter.

The Foxes intercepted the ball with 3:21 to go in the first quarter and were able to capitalize on the turnover. With 1:35 to go in the quarter, Segura ran the ball in from 21 yards out to put the Foxes up by the score of 14-0. Escalante turned the ball over on downs on their next possession and a fourth down conversion by the Foxes again extended their drive. The Foxes punched it in on a touchdown pass from Segura to Justin Downey with 10:11 to go in the half, making the score 21-0.

On the ensuing Escalante offensive drive, Hunter Sturgeon of the Foxes took the ball 15 yards to score on a pick-six with 8:32 to go in the half and the score 28-0. Escalante's Esteban Archuleta connected with Anthony Martinez on a 19-yard touchdown pass to make the score 28-7 Ft. Sumner/House with 4:10 to go in the first half. The drive was set up on a Martinez run and a drive-extending face mask penalty by the Foxes.

The Foxes fumbled the Lobos' kickoff and Escalante recovered. The Foxes defense held the Lobos and their special teams partially blocked a punt to give them the ball at their own 49. With 2:21 to go in the first half, Segura connected with Sturgeon for a 51-yard touchdown, giving the Foxes a 35-7 lead.

In a strange turn of events, Ft. Sumner intercepted on the next Escalante offensive possession at the Lobos' 39-yard line. A pass from Segura to Francisco Chavez took the Foxes to the one-yard line. On the next play, the Foxes fumbled the ball at the one and the Lobos recovered. The Lobos then fumbled the ball back to the Foxes at the 19-yard line with 51 seconds to go in the half. Segura connected with Brant West with 44 seconds for a touchdown pass, putting the Foxes up 41-7 at halftime.

On the opening possession of the second half, the Foxes scored on a touchdown pass from Segura to Lewis, putting the Foxes up 49-7. On the Lobos' first possession, they turned the ball over on downs, giving the ball back to the Foxes at mid-field. Another touchdown pass from Segura to West put the Foxes up 55-7 with 6:03 to go in the third, which is where the score remained.

The Foxes win marked the program's 11th state title and their first since 2010. The Foxes had played in the past two state title games, losing to Escalante in 2015 and Lordsburg in 2016.



## Eunice Earns 13th State Football Title

The Eunice Cardinals (13-0) captured their 13th overall football championship with a 34-13 victory over the Capitan Tigers (11-2) in the 2018 NMAA 3A State Football Championship game.

It was the first title for the Cardinals since 2000.

Capitan scored first on a 5-yard touchdown run by quarterback Price Bowen with 7:02 left in the first quarter, taking a 6-0 lead after the missed extra point.

Eunice answered with under minute left in first on a 1-yard touchdown run by quarterback Mason Caperton. The Cardinals connected on the extra point, taking the lead at 7-6.

Eunice forced fumble on the ensuing kickoff and moved the ball into the red-zone as time expired in the first quarter. Then just two plays into second quarter, place-kicker Pat Kramer connected for a 25-yard FG making it 10-6, Eunice.

The Cardinals' Juan Sosa scored with just minutes left in the second quarter on an 11-yard touchdown run to give Eunice a 17-6 lead. Eunice carried that lead into the locker room at the half.

Eunice started with the ball in the third quarter, quickly scoring on a 46-yard touchdown pass from Caperton to Tari York giving the Cardinals a 24-6 lead, just 90 seconds into the quarter.

Following another Capitan turnover, Caperton hit Sosa for a 63-yard touchdown pass to make it 31-6, half way through the third quarter. As the Cardinals had then scored 31 consecutive points.

Capitan did get on the board with a 13-yard touchdown pass from Bowen to Jacob Smith, making it 31-13 with 4:21 left in the 3rd quarter.

The Cardinals added a 15-yard field goal by Kramer with just over three minutes left in the game but the Tigers could not find the end-zone again as Eunice captured the 2017 3A State Football Championship by a final score of 34-13.



## Warriors Win 4A State Football Championship

The 2017 NMAA Class 4A Football State Championship Game between the Robertson Cardinals (11-2) and the Ruidoso Warriors (10-3) was a game for the record books. The Warriors laid claim to the 2017 title with a 57-54 win over the Cardinals.

Once the final horn sounded, the two championship caliber rivals had racked up 111 points, 1,178 yards of total offense, including 650 passing yards, 12 lead changes, a 99 ½ yard halfback option pass, and 14 points in the final 72 seconds of the game, including the game winner by Ruidoso with five seconds remaining on the clock. Robertson quarterback Arjay Ortiz alone accounted for 343 yards passing and 170 yards rushing, and accounted for six touchdowns, four passing and two rushing. Not to be outdone, his Ruidoso counterpart Brennam Stewart accounted for 208 yards passing and 81 yards rushing, including three touchdowns.

From the opening kickoff, it was evident that defense was going to be scarce. The only drive that did not result in a score in the first half occurred when Stewart's pass into the end zone resulted in an interception by Ortiz. On the strength of that interception, the Cardinals led 28-21 at the half.

Robertson upped the lead on the first possession of the second half on a 41-yard quarterback keeper by Ortiz and it looked as if the Cardinals would increase that lead to three touchdowns after the ensuing kickoff. A squib kick was fumbled by the Warriors, and they started the possession on their own two yard line. Two plays lost all but a half inch from a safety and the Warriors faced a 3rd and 12 inside their own 1-yard line. In what was the turning point of the game, halfback Gabriel Dorame took a pitch from Stewart, which drew the Robertson cornerback to attempt to stop the run. Dorame launched a perfect strike to sophomore Layson Powell. Powell took the pass at the 25-yard line and sprinted 75 yards untouched into the end zone.

The teams traded touchdowns on successive possessions before Ruidoso recovered a Robertson fumble on the next kickoff. Ruidoso regained the lead 43-40 on the next play on a 32-yard scamper by Isaiah Otero, who tallied 120 yards on the day. It took Robertson just one play to gain the lead, as Arjay Ortiz made two nifty moves and outran the Warrior secondary on a 76-yard touchdown gallop, putting Robertson back on top 47-43.

A muffed punt and 10-yard Otero dash gave Ruidoso the lead back 50-47. Robertson appeared to be out of gas but a 50-yard completion from Ortiz to Emiliano Berge on a 4th and 14 gave the Cardinals new life. A 17-yard touchdown pass from Ortiz to Jacob Gamel put the Cardinals back on top 54-50. The stage was set for one final dramatic moment. A 40-yard dash by Stewart with 17.8 seconds gave the Warriors the ball at the Cardinals 20-yard line. A 15-yard pass to Dorame brought the ball to the 5-yard line with five seconds remaining. Stewart had one more trick up his sleeve as he took a direct snap and started into the middle of the line. Seeing that lane closed off, he rolled to his right and fit a nifty pass over the outstretched arm of Ismael Martinez and into the waiting arms of Dorame as time expired.

With that, Ruidoso took home the blue trophy, the program's first since 2014, when they defeated Cobre High School.



## Artesia Bulldogs Capture 30th State Football Championship in Class 5A Final

The Class 5A Football State Championship saw the top seeded Artesia Bulldogs hosting the second-seeded Belen Eagles at the storied Bulldog Bowl in Artesia, NM on December 2, 2017 in front of a standing room only crowd.

Belen received the opening kickoff and drove 75 yards on the first possession of the game, culminating in a two-yard touchdown by Eagles' junior Diego Casillas, giving the Eagles an early 7-0 lead over the Bulldogs. Casillas carried the ball 13 times for 58 yards on the opening drive of the game. The score remained 7-0 at the end of one quarter.

The Bulldogs were forced to punt on their first offensive possession after a pair of sacks by the Eagles' defense. Artesia then stopped Belen on their next possession, forcing the Eagles to punt.

Artesia found the end zone three times in the second quarter. Chaney Hardt scored on a 5-yard pass from Taylor Null with 8:24 to go in the half, tying the score at 7-7. After forcing a Belen three-and-out, Artesia quickly drove the ball downfield and, with the ball at the Eagles' 12-yardline, Null ran into the end zone and put the Bulldogs on top 14-7. After a turnover by Belen in the Artesia red zone, Null once again ran the ball in and put the Bulldogs up 21-7 heading into the locker room at halftime.

The Bulldogs cashed in on the opening drive of the second half, after a kick return to midfield by AJ Estrada. Null led Artesia down the field, resulting in a rushing touchdown by running back Robert Fernandez. After a failed two-point conversion attempt, the Bulldogs led 27-7.

Belen answered with a long drive of their own, largely on the shoulders of Casillas, who had a 33-yard run and a 22-yard run during the Eagles' first possession of the second half. With the ball on the 10-yard line, Casillas ran the ball into the end zone, bringing the score to 27-14 with 4:32 to go in the quarter. The Eagles held Artesia on downs at midfield on the next drive. Artesia's defense forced a fumble on a long run by Casillas, followed by a 63-yard touchdown reception from Null to Joe Willingham, putting Artesia ahead by a score of 34-14 to start the fourth quarter.

On Belen's next possession, they drove the ball deep into Bulldogs' territory. An interception gave the ball back to the Bulldogs and another Null to Willingham touchdown put the Bulldogs up 41-14. An Eagles' turnover on their final possession of the game gave the ball back to the Bulldogs, who made it into the end zone one more time, to bring the final score to 48-14.

The Bulldogs outgained the Eagles in total yardage 440-304. Null finished 30-33 for 340 yards passing. Junior Casillas of Belen amassed 235 yards on the ground, scoring both touchdowns for the Eagles. Artesia finished the season with an 11-2 record and the title game was Belen's only loss, finishing at 12-1.

The win marked the third state title for the Bulldogs in the past four years and their 30th overall. The championship was the first blue trophy for second year head coach Rex Henderson. The Bulldogs overall post-season record since 1954 is a staggering 94-19-1.



## Manzano Wins First State Championship in Football

The 2017 NMAA Class 6A State Football Championship game between the Manzano Monarchs (13-0) and the La Cueva Bears (11-2) turned out to be nothing like what anyone would have expected. All season long, the two teams proved to be offensive juggernauts, but it was the defense for both teams that came to play that day. In the end, Manzano capped off an undefeated season with 14-7 win over La Cueva and hoisted the blue trophy for the first time in school history in the sport of football.

It was the first time two teams from Albuquerque Public Schools met in the state championship game and the first time since 2009 that a team from Albuquerque won the coveted blue trophy.

The game started with La Cueva driving down the field deep into Manzano's territory. However, the Monarchs defense held the Bears on third and six and forced a field goal attempt. Manzano was not willing to give up the first points of the game so easily, as Andrew Erickson blocked the 20-yard field goal attempt, with the Monarchs taking over inside their own 20 with 9:30 to go in the first quarter.

The Monarchs drove the ball down the field inside the Bears' 10-yard line but were unable to capitalize, turning the ball over on downs with just over seven minutes to play. Both teams punted the ball away on their next possession as the first quarter of play ended with the score tied at 0-0.

La Cueva's opening drive of the second quarter saw the Bears drive all the way down the field, eventually facing a fourth down and inches at the 1-yard line of Manzano. On a direct snap to the Bears' Derek Loidolt, the Monarchs defense came up with a huge defensive stop inside the one to take over on downs with eight minutes left in the half.

Manzano was unable to make anything happen and was forced to punt for the second time in the game with three minutes to go in the second quarter, as the score remained 0-0. The first half of play ended in a scoreless tie.

The third quarter started much the same with both defenses maintaining control of the game. Then, with 4:17 left in the third, Manzano's Jordan Byrd broke loose down the left side of the field for 41 yards and a touchdown. The extra point was good as, the Monarchs took a 7-0 lead.

On La Cueva's next possession, Manzano's Austin Walker intercepted quarterback Dylan Summer, giving the Monarchs great field position with 1:24 left in the third. Manzano held possession of the ball into the first few minutes of the fourth quarter and was forced to punt the ball back to La Cueva, still holding just a 7-0 advantage.

La Cueva then drove 80 yards down field and tied the game at 7-7 on a 9-yard touchdown pass from Dylan Summer to Grant Giesler with 7:40 to go in the game. Giesler had three receptions on the drive to help tie the score.

From their own 20-yard line, Manzano marched to midfield with just under five minutes left in the game. Erickson took the ball on a sweep, 48 yards for a touchdown with 4:17 left in the game. The extra point was good and the Monarchs led 14-7.

Both teams were forced to punt on their next possessions, as La Cueva had one last chance to tie the game with almost 75 yards to go in under a minute. The Bears took the ball to the Manzano 40-yard line and tried a "Hail Mary" to the endzone but it was incomplete. With that play, Manzano won their first ever State Football Championship by a final score of 14-7.











