



western sky
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2020-2021 Western Sky Community Care State Cross Country Championships

Cloudcroft Wins A-2A Boys Cross Country Title

Cloudcroft High School placed three of the top nine runners and took home top honors in Class A-AA at the 2020-2021 Western Sky Community Care Cross Country State Championships. The Bears finished first with 23 points. Quemado was second with 53 and Cimarron third with 62. Individually Gilly Valdez of Penasco posted the fastest time at 17:04.78. He was a little more than five seconds faster than Cloudcroft's Max Preslar who finished second. "Since I arrived at Penasco in the 7th grade, I had role models that are now running at the next level, so I had something to live up to," said Valdez.



ATC Captures Back-to-Back A-2A Girls Championships

The Academy for Technology and the Classics finished first for the second straight season, taking the blue trophy at the 2020-2021 Western Sky Community Care Cross Country State Championships. ATC, with four runners in the top-10, posted a team score of 24 points. They edged out second place Pecos by six points. Capitan was third with 54 points. Pecos had the fastest runner of the race, Vanessa Dominguez (20:00.01). "I started off with a good pace and started pushing it at the second mile and I realized this is my last year and I have to go as hard as I can," said Dominguez following the win.



Cottonwood Classical Wins First 3A Boys State Cross Country Title

The Cottonwood Classical boys cross country program won their 1st ever championship in the sport in the spring of 2021. Cottonwood Classical took home top honors in Class AAA with a total of 14 points, well ahead of runner-up Tohatchi (47 points) and 3rd place finisher NMMI (52 points). Cottonwood Classical placed four runners in the top nine, including first place individual Justin Howey who clocked in at 15:59.28. Howey, the 2019 state runner-up, was a little over a minute ahead of this year's second place finisher Justin Miller of New Mexico Military Institute. "I felt good on the first mile," said Howey. "I started to get a little tired in the second mile, but I kept my pace and stayed pretty steady throughout."



Cottonwood Classical Repeats at 3A Girls State Champs

Cottonwood Classical made it a boys/girls sweep in Class AAA. Cottonwood Classical won state for the second straight season with 13 points. NMMI was second with 46 points and Bosque School third with 61. Individually, Cottonwood Classical's Alyx Mastor finished first with a time of 18:37.20. "When I was on the course, I saw my coach and she was yelling, 'Big arms, big legs, you got this!,'" said Mastor. "I thought to myself, 'She believes in me, I think I can do it.'" Cottonwood Classical had four of the top five and five of the top seven runners.



Hope Christian Captures 4A Boys Championship

Hope Christian became the first school other than Albuquerque Academy or Los Alamos to win the state championship in New Mexico's second-largest classification in 24 years. The Huskies won the blue trophy in Class AAAA with total of 18 points. Los Alamos finished second with 28 points and Academy was third with 37. Hope finished 1-2-3 individually in dominating fashion. Top honors went to Rendon Kuykendall (15:17.84) who was 11 seconds faster than his teammate Eric Scharton who finished second. Hope's Cade Martin took third, 25 seconds behind Kuykendall. "These guys are the best competition, these guys on my team," said Kuykendall following the win.



Los Alamos Girls Take 4A Team and Individual Titles

For the second straight season, team and individual honors in Class AAAA went to Los Alamos High School. Junior Norissa Valdez was the first runner to cross the finish line with a time of 19:16.44, nine seconds ahead of Academy's Emma Patton. It was the second straight individual state title for Valdez. "I was just trying to keep a strong mentality and not give in," said the junior. "At 300 meters left I tried to give it all I got." The Hilltoppers finished with 23 points, Academy was second with 35 and St. Pius X took third with 54.



Cleveland Boys Make It a 4-Peat in Class 5A

For the fourth straight season, the Cleveland Storm took home the blue trophy in the state's largest classification. Cleveland finished first with a team total of 31 points, edging out second place Rio Rancho by four points. Alamogordo was third with 81 points. Piedra Vista's Harvey Makua took the lead in the final 60 meters to beat Cleveland's Ricardo Rangel-Valencia down the stretch. Harvey posted a time of 15:49.91, after overcoming a bout with COVID-19 just months earlier. "That kick at the end was all heart, I just wanted it more," said the winner. "It was tough coming back from COVID. My confidence was going down, but now it's the greatest feeling. If anyone is having trouble, use me as an inspiration. You can come back from anything. Hard work will pay off."



Rio Rancho Girls Back on Top of Class 5A for the First Time Since 2015

For the first time since 2015, the Rio Rancho girls cross country team won the Class 5A Cross Country State Championships. The Rams had three of the top 9 runners and finished with 35 points, nine points ahead of second-place Eldorado. Alamogordo was third with 45 points. Eldorado's Laurynn Sisneros was the individual champion with a time of 18:35.78. "The first mile was tough and the rest of the race went by in a blur," said Sisneros. "It's my last state meet, so this is exciting."

