Indiana High School Athletic Association

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MEDIA

ADVISORY

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TRI-WEST HENDRICKS HOLDS OFF HARDING IN OFFENSIVE SHOOTOUT

Tri-West Hendricks won a wild offensive fireworks display holding off a determined Harding team for a 41-36 victory in the IHSAA Class 2A state championship game at the RCA Dome.

The game came down to two key punt plays that benefited Tri-West. First, after Harding fought back to within 35-29 on a Reginald Smith to Dwight Coleman touchdown pass with 9:57 to go, the Hawks forced Tri-West to punt. Following the kick, the ball bounced and touched one of the Harding players and was recovered by the Bruins at the Harding 42. Three plays later Bruin quarterback T.J. Siple hit Justin Rutherford for 38 yards down to the Harding 1 and Adam Quilter took it in on the next play for a 41-29 advantage.

The second key play that went the Bruins way came with just over two minutes remaining. Following a quick Harding drive that lasted just over a minute when Smith ran it in from nine yards out to bring the Hawks back to within 41-36, Tri-West was forced to punt once again. However, the Hawks were called for roughing the kicker on the play and the ball went back to Tri-West with an automatic first down. From there the Bruins successfully converted another first down and ran out the remaining seconds on the clock.

It was the second football state title for Tri-West Hendricks, a school of 444 students located in Hendricks County just west of Indianapolis. The Bruins, who finished 14-1 this season, also won the 1996 title in Class A and also have a pair of runner-up finishes to their credit in 1989 (2A) and 1995 (A). Mark Haste was the coach for both championship teams.

Harding, under coach Sherwood Haydock, completed a 13-2 season and was making its first trip to the football state finals.

Tri-West Hendricks scored on its first two possessions of the game to take an early 14-0 first quarter lead. Siple snuck in from one yard out at the 7:26 mark and, after holding the Harding offense to a three and out, the Bruins scored again with 1:19 to go on a 24 yard pass to Justin Rutherford from Siple to cap a 12 play, 81 yard drive. Rutherford finished with 126 yards receiving and two touchdowns. Siple completed 21 of 35 passes for 323 yards and a Class 2A record four TD passes.

Harding answered on its next possession when Coleman caught a 22 yard pass from Smith on the first play of the second quarter. The extra point attempt was blocked. Smith threw for 235 yards on 15 of 29 attempts and three touchdowns and one interception. He also crushed a 65 yard punt in the first half, a Class 2A championship game record.

Tri-West took a 21-6 lead when Rutherford, turning his defender around, got loose and caught a 22 yard pass on the left side and took it into the endzone with 8:41 left in the second quarter. The Hawks pulled within a touchdown just over two minutes later when Marquez Thornton, a 6-2, 250 pound fullback, bulled in from two yards out. Smith then hit Chris Palomo in the endzone for the two-point conversion.

Harding threatened again but Smith s pass on 4th and 13 from the 24 yard line was tipped and picked off by Evan Schenck at the 1 and returned to the 39 yard line. The Bruins took advantage of the opportunity six plays later as Siple found Chris Jinkins for a 40 yard strike and a 28-14 lead with 1:07 to go before halftime.

On the first possession of the second half, Smith scrambled on 3rd and 21 play from his own 14 yard line, avoided a sack in the endzone and found Selwyn Lymon, who made a leaping grab in traffic and raced 86 yards to the endzone to again, pull within a touchdown at 28-21. Lymon finished with 137 yards on five receptions.

Siple then connected on his record-breaking touchdown pass when Chris Rutherford pulled in a 24-yarder with 3:38 left in the third for a 35-21 lead.

T.J. Siple Named Eskew Mental Attitude Award Winner

Thomas J. Siple of Class 2A state champion Tri-West Hendricks was named winner of the 2003 Class 2A Football Phil N. Eskew Mental Attitude Award.

At the conclusion of each state championship game, the IHSAA Executive Committee presents the award to an outstanding senior participant in the football state tournament. The recipient of the award, who was nominated by his principal and coach, must excel in mental attitude, scholarship, leadership and athletic ability. The award is named in honor of the third commissioner of the IHSAA who served from 1962 to 1976 and oversaw the beginning of the state football tournament.

T.J. was the state leader in passing yardage for the 2003 season, with 3,357 yards heading into the championship game. He set school records for passing yardage and touchdowns and is a finalist for Mr. Football. He is also a member of the Bruins baseball team.

Academically, he ranks 13th in his class of 106 and is a member of the National Honor Society. He plans to attend Wabash College, with a major in Mathematics.

He has been an active participant in the local Youth 4-Youth and Youth Day of Caring activities each year throughout his high school career. He also has held leadership roles in the Renaissance Committee, an organization responsible for recognizing staff and student successes at Tri-West, and the Bruin Council, a student leadership organization. He becomes the third Tri-West Hendricks football player to capture the coveted Mental Attitude Award, along with Rori Chaney in 1989 (Class 2A) and James Hanlin in 1995 (Class A).

T.J. is the son of Dee Dee and Tom Siple of Pittsboro.

Farm Bureau Insurance, the IHSAA corporate partner, presented a \$1,000.00 scholarship to Tri-West Hendricks High School in the name of Thomas J. Siple.

Game Notes

Class 2A Championship Game Records

Longest punt: 65 yards by Reginald Smith of Harding (previous record was 57 yards by Matt Scott of Danville vs. Fort Wayne Bishop Luers in 1999).

Most TD Passes: 4 TD passes by T.J. Siple of Tri-West Hendricks (previous record was three by several players)

Most TD Receptions: 2 by Justin Rutherford of Tri-West Hendricks (tied mark held by several players)

New IHSAA Book, Play On, Recaps 100 Years Of High School Sports in Indiana

Looking for holiday gift ideas? The exciting new book, <u>Play On</u>, celebrating 100 years of high school sports in Indiana, is perfect for that sports fan or the history buff you know. Filled with 150 pages of engaging photographs, captivating stories and a walk down memory lane, it s now on sale through the Indiana High School Athletic Association. It is not available in book stores, so contact the IHSAA at 317-846-6601 or click on the link above to learn more about this special tribute to 100 years of Indiana high school athletics.

Team Posters And Individual Action Photographs Available

Visit <u>20-20 Photographic</u>, the IHSAA s photographer and the Midwest s Leader in Sports Action Photography, for images captured during this weekend s state championship games! Action photos and team photos as well as the 20-20 s Ultimate Sports Poster will be available for purchase later in the week following the state finals.

IHSAA State Championship Merchandise

For t-shirts and other merchandise commemorating this year s tournament or for any of our events, visit our friends at Morris, Inc.

State Finals Programs Available

Couldnet be there for the football state finals? You can still purchase a copy of the official state finals program while supplies last! Programs are \$3.00 if you purchase in person at the IHSAA Office (9150 N. Meridian Street in Indianapolis) or \$5.00 by mail (postage included). To order, send a check for \$5.00 made payable to the IHSAA, a note including your return address and brief description of your request and mail to: IHSAA Programs, PO Box 40650, Indianapolis, IN 46240-0650. Sorry, no credit cards.

Quotes

Tri-West Hendricks Coach Mark Haste

♦ I told the kids before the game that we hadn ♦ t played our best game yet. I think we did tonight. We talk all the time about linemen determining the outcome of a game and I think our linemen did that tonight. It all starts up front and we were able to protect our quarterback and give him time to find his receivers. T.J. Siple played a heck of a game. He ♦ s a great kid and he ♦ s truly a mental attitude award winner. ♦

(On roughing the kicker penalty) No, I didn t really want to see their offense get back on the field. They have some tremendous athletes. Things went our way and I just feel pretty lucky right now.

(On winning the football state title for the second time) I can timagine it ever feeling bad.

Tri-West Hendricks Quarterback T.J. Siple

Winning the mental attitude was great. It was just icing on the cake. I was just one of many who was deserving of this award.

Harding Coach Sherwood Haydock

When you get two stops on defense and make them punt the ball, it hurts when the ball hits a player and you get a roughing call. But the calls on the punts didnot get us beat. That just put us in a situations where we just couldnot win.

We dug ourselves a hole early but we kept on making comebacks. Tri-West beat us at our own game. We also like to throw the ball. We had a couple of opportunities at the end and the way we were playing we just needed one more possession. Reggie Smith had been a big playmaker for us all year.

They beat us on getting their guys open. Our defense didn t play very well. Tri-West is a good team, they deserve to win a state championship.