

Indiana High School Athletic Association

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Blake Ress, Commissioner

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SHERIDAN WINS SEVENTH CLASS A STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

Sheridan added a late touchdown to secure the Class A state championship with a 21-7 victory over Knightstown at the RCA Dome in Indianapolis.

Freshman quarterback Nick Zachery ♦s second touchdown run of the game ♦ a three-yarder ♦ with :51 seconds remaining put the game out of reach.

It was the seventh state title overall for the school in eight appearances in the championship game and its first since 1998. Each title has come in Class A and with coach Larry ♦Bud♦ Wright at the helm. Wright ♦s seven state titles ranks second in state football history. Sheridan finished the year 13-2.

Zachery got the Blackhawks on the board first on a 49-yard run at the 8:54 mark of the first quarter. Knightstown senior tailback Matt Cox helped even the game late in the first quarter on a one-yard carry. That score was set up on the previous play by a 70-yard completion from Eric Freeman to Michael Guinn down to the one yard line.

Scott Taylor added a six-yard score with 3:29 left in the first half to put Sheridan up 14-7 which they took to the locker room.

Taylor led Sheridan with 143 yards on 27 carries, while Zachery finished with 121 yards on 22 carries. Freeman completed half of his 26 passes for 196 yards but was picked off twice.

Knightstown suffered its first loss of the year after 14 straight victories and finished as state runner-up for the second time in as many visits to the championship game (1997). It also was the last game for head coach Don Willard who announced his intention to retire prior to the season. Willard spent 39 years directing the Knightstown program ending with a 216-180-3 record.

Sheridan didn ♦t complete a pass in the championship game joining two other Class A schools with that distinction. Garrett in 1974 and Sheridan ♦s 1992 team also won the state title without completing a pass.

KNIGHTSTOWN ♦S MATT COX HONORED WITH ESKEW MENTAL ATTITUDE AWARD

Knightstown senior running back/outside linebacker Matt Cox is the 2005 recipient of the Phil N. Eskew Mental Attitude Award for Class A Football presented by the IHSAA Executive Committee. ♦ The award is presented to a senior nominated by his principal and coach who excels in mental attitude, scholarship, leadership and athletic ability. ♦ The award is named in honor of Mr. Eskew, who served as the IHSAA ♦s third commissioner from 1962-76. ♦ Under Eskew ♦s leadership, the IHSAA football state tournament was initiated in 1973.

Cox helped Knightstown to its second state finals berth and first since 1997. ♦ Cox led the state in scoring (228) and he ranked sixth in rushing touchdowns (31) and eighth in rushing yards (2,050).

Cox ranks 11th in his senior class, serving as a delegate to Hoosier Boys ♦ State. ♦ The National Honor Society student and student council president has volunteered for Special Olympics and Riley Children ♦s Hospital.

◆Matt is a very dedicated individual who sets high goals for himself and possesses the attributes of perseverance, unselfishness and courage in order to achieve those goals,◆ said Knightstown principal James Diagostino.◆
◆Matt persevered through two ACL surgeries during his sophomore and junior years to come back and lead the team through this memorable year.◆

Cox, who plans to attend the Naval Academy or Purdue, is the son of Rodney Cox and Kara Peggs.◆ Cox became the first Knightstown player to win the Eskew award in football.

Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance, the IHSAA◆s corporate partner, presented a scholarship check for \$1,000 to Knightstown High School in the name of Matt Cox.

VSN MEANS ACTION PHOTOGRAPHY

Visit our friends at [Visual Sports Network](#), the IHSAA◆s official photographer for all state championship events and one of the leading action photographers in the Midwest. VSN, which was on site on Friday, has captured hundreds of images from this year◆s State Finals and will have them ready for viewing and purchase beginning Sunday.

STATE FINALS PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

Couldn◆t be in there for the state finals? You can still purchase a copy of the official souvenir 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, have your Visa or MasterCard ready and call us at 317-846-6601 during business hours (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. EST).

Quotes on the Class A Game

Sheridan Coach Larry ◆Bud◆ Wright

◆I really felt this was going to be a higher scoring game.◆ We knew their linebackers were good and their two inside guys were awful big.◆ Their defensive ends were tough.◆ They (defensive ends) really shut us down at times and stopped us from getting some big plays.◆ They just played outstanding.◆ They controlled us pretty good but we just kept pounding away.◆

◆We made a couple of adjustments but they countered pretty good and it was just back-and-forth in that second half there for a while.◆ They kept widening out to stop the option on the outside, so we had to come back inside.◆

(On Freshman Quarterback Nick Zachery (#7)) ◆He◆s been around the program since he was just knee high, he has been a ball boy for six or seven years and he has just grown up with the program with his whole family.◆ He has done an excellent job for us.◆ He is a heck of a football player, actually he is a heck of an athlete.◆ He participates in track, football, basketball◆ he can do it all.◆ He is just a great athlete.◆

(On the seven years since last state title) ◆We got down and had a couple of bad years, I knew I had a good group coming (last years senior class) and I was not sure if I wanted to go through a 4-year cycle with them.◆ I decided to go through that cycle with them.◆ I credit last year◆s seniors with bringing this program back where it belongs.◆ This is very, very special.◆ We really thought we would be here last year◆this year a lot of people said we are a year late and a year early.◆ It really doesn◆t make a difference because we won it.◆ It feels very good!◆

(On the possibility of Warren Central head coach and son Kevin Wright winning tomorrow) ◆That would be really great!◆ All we have to do is get Kent down here with Lebanon and that would complete the circle.◆ We are all lucky to have some great athletes.◆

#7 Nick Zachery

◆ I play a big role and I know I have a lot to do, but I have coach Wright and a great coaching staff that helps me and I want to thank them. ◆ It was great tonight! ◆ Our offensive line opened up some great holes tonight and they play so well all the time. ◆ We couldn't do anything without them. ◆ I never thought I would be able to do this, this year. ◆ I thought maybe next year but certainly not this season. ◆

Knightstown Coach Don Willard

◆ They got up first, but we were able to come back with a long pass to Michael Guinn. After Matt Cox got the touchdown, I thought we were in pretty good shape. ◆

◆ I think the key was when they had us deep in our own territory and came back and scored late in the first half. Our play especially in the second quarter hurt us more than anything. ◆

◆ We couldn't get much offense going most of the game. Every time we started to get something going, it seemed we would have a penalty or make a mistake and Sheridan would stop us. ◆

(On the season) ◆ It was a fantastic season. We didn't think we would win 14 games. We started out thinking we'd be pretty good and then we got going and we were finding ways to win. We just came up one game short. ◆

(On retiring after 39 years at Knightstown) ◆ Right now it seems like another game. But next week when I think about it, it will be more than just that. I've had 39 great years at Knightstown High School. ◆

(On play in the fourth quarter) ◆ We still felt we could score. We just didn't play like we did the last three weeks. We needed to stop them and score quickly and we just couldn't do it. ◆

(On Mental Attitude Award winner Matt Cox) ◆ He's a great kid and a good leader. He's trying to get in one of the military academies. ◆