

Four Florida Teams Claim National Championships at 62nd Pop Warner Super Bowl at Disney

Florida youth football teams from Miami, Palm Beach and Jacksonville returned home with shiny new hardware for each of their respective trophy cases after powering their way to national championships at the 62nd annual Pop Warner Super Bowl at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Walt Disney World Resort.

Over the past two years, eight teams from the state of Florida have won Pop Warner national championships at both the Division I and Division II levels.

The final game of the 2018 Pop Warner Super Bowl tournament was arguably the week's best game.

With the Division I Pee Wee championship on the line and trailing the Far West Jets (Phoenix, AZ) 18-12 with less than seven minutes to play, the Westside Wildcats (Jacksonville, FL) forced a fumble at the one-yard line and began the game-winning drive on to their own 28.

The Wildcats methodically drove the ball 72 yards for the game-winning score – a four-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Nikko Bates to wide receiver Hylton Bates on a perfectly executed fade route to the corner of the end zone as time expired to tie the game at 18.

On the very next play, Bates' successful quarterback keeper up the middle, propelled the undefeated Wildcats (12-0) to their first ever Pop Warner Super Bowl championship with an improbable 19-18 win over the Jets.

In other championship action, Palmetto Raiders head coach Arties Knight, a 23-year Pop Warner coaching veteran, earned his fourth career Super Bowl title as the Raiders, powered by two interceptions returned for touchdowns, blanked Hoffman Estates, 28-0, in the Division I Jr. Varsity national championship game on Saturday. Palmetto's Pop Warner Super Bowl win was its sixth (1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2017 and 2018) in program history.

Other teams claiming national championships included the Division I Junior Pee Wee Virginia Beach Mustangs, who posted shutouts in two of their three games, including a 25-0 win over the St. Phillips Saints (Dallas, TX) in the championship game. The Mustangs averaged nearly 28 points per game, allowed one defensive touchdown during the tournament and outscored their three opponents, 83-7.

Teams claiming national championship titles in Division II included the Pop Warner Pee Wee Brick City Lions (Newark, N.J.) and the Unlimited Division Brick City Lions (Newark, N.J.).

The Brick City Pee Wee team used a punishing ground attack to power its way to a 26-8 win over the Rancho Cucamonga Cougars (Rancho Cucamonga, CA) in the championship game. During their march to the 2018

championship this week at Disney, the Tigers posted one shutout and outscored their three opponents, 95-40.

Their Unlimited division counterparts, not to be outdone, averaged nearly 31 points per game and played suffocating defense, yielding only 32 points over three games on their way to Brick City's second championship of the 2018 Pop Warner Super Bowl tournament.

Sixty-four teams from around the nation participated in the weeklong national championship youth football tournament, held annually at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Walt Disney World Resort.

National champions were crowned in five divisions based on age and weight – Jr. Pee Wee (ages 8-11), Pee Wee (ages 9-12), Jr. Varsity (ages 10-13), Varsity (ages 12-15) and Unlimited (ages 11-14, 105-lb. minimum).

Below are the results:

Division I Junior Pee Wee: Virginia Beach Mustangs (Virginia Beach, VA) beat St. Phillips Saints (Dallas, TX), 25-0

Division I Pee Wee: Westside Wildcats (Jacksonville, FL) beat Far West Jets (Phoenix, AZ), 19-18

Division I Junior Varsity: Palmetto Raiders (Miami, FL) beat Hoffman Estate Redhawks (Chicago, IL), 28-0. The Raiders, who are coached by

Division I Varsity: North Philadelphia Aztecs (Philadelphia, PA) beat Milton Steelers (Atlanta, GA) 31-0

Unlimited Division: Brick City Lions (Newark, N.J.) beat Garden Grove Bulldogs (Orange County, CA), 32-12

Division II Junior Pee Wee: Royal Palm Beach (Palm Beach, FL) beat Far West Tigers (Phoenix, AZ), 34-0

Division II Pee Wee: Brick City Lions (Newark, N.J.) beat Rancho Cucamonga Cougars (Rancho Cucamonga, CA), 26-8

Division II Junior Varsity: Palm Beach Gardens Gators (Palm Beach, FL) beat Lenape Valley Indians (Philadelphia, PA), 36-8

More than 70 percent of active NFL players got their starts competing on Pop Warner teams across the country, including two-time NFL Super Bowl champion Peyton Manning (Indianapolis Colts, Denver Broncos), 11-time Pro Bowl wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald (Arizona Cardinals), and three-time Pro Bowl quarterback Andrew Luck (Indianapolis Colts).

For more information, visit <http://www.popwarnersb.com>. You can also follow the Pop Warner Super Bowl on Twitter @Pop Warner, @ESPNWWOS, and on www.facebook.com/espnwwos. For more information on Disney Sports, visit www.disneysportsnews.com.

Video highlights will be available for download at box.com using:

- **Username:** webupdate@popwarner.com
- **Password:** PWLS@2018!

For photos and team updates, please contact csnider@ctpboston.com or bheffron@ctpboston.com.

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