

# Champions: Jesuit Claims 1st State Title Since 1960

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Extra

**By William Fine, News Editor**

Songy's Blue Jays defeat John Curtis 17-14



Jesuit students filled the Superdome with cheers, shouts and signs to support the football team. Thousands filled the stadium to witness the heart-stopping championship game. Photo by Jay Combe

It took more than half a century.

But in a season that many might have written off due to any number of circumstances, the Jesuit Blue Jays made history on Dec. 5.

Jesuit's football team overcame the top-seeded John Curtis Patriots to win its first state championship in 54 years, taking the Division 1 title in the Allstate Sugar Bowl/LHSAA Prep Classic in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome.

The Jays peaked at the right time, closing the season with a six-game winning streak that included back to back wins against St. Augustine. The team was led by the outstanding leadership of Coach Mark Songy and his team of assistant coaches.

The Division 1 state finals got off to a late start, as both teams had to wait as earlier games ran long in the jam-packed Superdome. With both teams eager to get the action started, the game began slowly and, at first, didn't appear good for Jesuit.

The Jays could barely move the ball into the Patriots' territory, and Curtis was moving the ball pretty effectively with their triple option. Curtis finally broke through midway through the second quarter on a 75-yard drive. This woke the Jays up and the game continued at a heart-pounding pace.

The Jays answered with a 35-yard touchdown pass by quarterback Trey LaForge to leading receiver Kalija Lipscomb. The pass was set up by the rushing attack that had led them the whole drive.

The Jays defense was still having problems with the triple option however. Curtis drove down the field and scored their second touchdown with four seconds left in the half. The Jays went into the half trailing for the first time in the playoffs.

Jesuit drove early in the third quarter and came away with a field goal. The drive was led by Charles Jackson who rushed for 53 yards. The defense stepped it up in the second half allowing no points and forcing two turnovers. The Jays scored the game winning score early on in the fourth quarter. LaForge led the drive completing three passes for 60 yards. The drive was completed by Lipscomb with a 45-yard touchdown catch.

The defense came up big late in the game forcing a fumble with about five minutes left of play. On the last drive of the game, the defense stopped Curtis on 4th and eight. The ball was thrown in the direction of Jakirai Wiley who batted it down. With the win now assured, the Jays ran out the clock to close out the game and be crowned state champions.

Jackson was named the outstanding player with his game of 16 carries for 147 yards.

"This is the kind of stuff that you dream about, like when you're 4 years old, growing up on the playground," LaForge said.

Songy, who only returned to Jesuit this summer as head coach, emphasized that this one is for the entire Jesuit community.

Path to playoffs

The road to get “jays2thedome” was nearly as hard fought as the championship game.

The Jays opened the playoffs against St. Augustine, just a week after defeating the Purple Knights 34-20. The weather was cold, but the Jesuit team was hot. The rushing attack ran for roughly 300 yards. On Jesuit’s second possession, the team drove nearly 70 yards for a score. An equally as impressive third drive gained 52 yards for the touchdown.

The third touchdown occurred on a strike from LaForge to Lipscomb for a 35-yard score. The Jays had a 21-0 advantage at halftime. The Knights tried to mount a comeback with a second half touchdown but the Jays quelled any hope with two more touchdown passes from LaForge, giving the Jays a 35-6 lead. Jackson scored the final touchdown on a long touchdown run. The Jays won with a final score of 42-14.

In the state quarterfinals, Jesuit upset the St. Thomas More Cougars of Lafayette with a thrilling victory. Jesuit opened the game firing on all cylinders. The team drove the ball deep in the Cougars’ territory but came up with no points. The defense held the Cougar’s offense and the Jays went back to work, this time scoring a touchdown.

After a slew of miscues by both teams, including an exchange of interceptions, the Cougars scored a touchdown with about two minutes left in the first half, but failed the two-point conversion. The Blue Jay offense was stopped and had to punt before the end of the half.

The Cougars were headed to the end zone on the return until Crew Jacobs made a diving tackle with eight seconds left in the half. The Cougars opted to try for a field goal but missed. The Jays went into the half up 7-6. The Jays scored a second touchdown in the closing minutes of the third quarter to put them up 13-6. St. Thomas More tied the game up with a touchdown in the fourth quarter. After a couple of punts the Jays got the ball on their own 20. They drove 80 yards led by the rushing attack of Chris Mills and Jackson for the game-winning score, at 20-13 and set up a semi-finals match against Archbishop Rummel, which had handed Jesuit one of only two losses in the regular season. The Blue Jays had one goal – defeat the undefeated.

#### Undefeated falls

They did just that. The Jays got up early and never looked back. The Jays second drive included an outstanding 35-yard run by senior LaForge, which was capped by a short touchdown run by Jackson. Jesuit’s second touchdown came on a short pass and nifty run after the catch by tight end Alex Rabalais.

The Raiders answered with a long touchdown drive completed with 45 seconds left in the half. The Jays went into halftime leading 14-7. Mills answered the Raiders early in

the third quarter. On a third and short, he got the ball on a draw and ran 56 yards to score. He had a gaping hole set up by the offensive line and made a great move near the 20-yard line to get there.

The Jesuit defense came up big all night and continued to stop the Raiders into the fourth quarter. The Jays had the ball at about the Raider 20-yard line, and sent Mills and Malachi Hull into the end zone. The ball was thrown to Mills but was deflected by a Raider defender. It bounced right into Hull's hands for a touchdown. The Jays now held a 28-7 lead.

The Raiders got the ball back and drove down the field for a touchdown. The only hope the Raiders had was to recover an onside kick. They did recover the kick but the Jays' defense would have none of it.

They promptly stopped the Raiders. The Jays ran out the clock and right to the Superdome. They closed out the game with a 28-14 win.

"We picked the right time to play as well as we could and I think the guys knew everything that was at stake," Songy said, following the game.

The Jays found themselves in an unfamiliar territory now.

The football team had not been to the finals since 1978 and had not won the finals since 1960. Jesuit was now the underdog. The team had upset the third-seeded St. Thomas More, and the second-seeded Rummel Raiders. But going after No. 1 isn't easy.

In the school's history, Jesuit had only won eight football championships. Since Jesuit's last title, John Curtis had 26.

Sometimes, however, being the underdog isn't such a bad thing, after all. It's time to add a new page to the history books.