

Examiner Sports

Carmel Shields the Deal!



Rams Crowned NYS Class AA Grid Champs, 1st Ever in Putnam County

RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS

Carmel senior RB Dylan Shields gets loose for some of his 156 yards and one of three touchdowns he would score in the Rams' 42-12 NYSPHSAA Class AA title win over Section 6 champion Bennett Academy (Buffalo) last Saturday at the Carrier Dome in Syracuse where Carmel Coach Todd Cayea passed off the state title paque to captain TJ Fusco and OL/DL Scott Danvin (inset) before the Rams posed off (inset) as the first team in Putnam County history to ever win a state grid title... see Class AA Grid Notebook



History Made: Carmel Crowned Putnam's 1st NYS Grid Champs

Unbeaten Rams Crush Bennett Academy, 42-12, Romp Through State Tourney

By Ray Gallagher
Examiner Sports Editor @Directrays

SYRACUSE -- Section 6 Class AA champion Buffalo Bennett had never seen anything like Section 1 champion Carmel all year. In fact, few teams in state history have seen anything like the 2021 Rams. In one of the most dominating performances in the history of the state tournament, Coach Todd Cayea's Rams (13-0) romped through the field in historic fashion, including Saturday's 42-12 victory over Bennett in the NYSPHSAA championship at the fabled Carrier Dome.

Carmel became Putnam County's first-ever state football champion, doing so by crushing 13 foes by 24 points or more by a combined 512-81 margin, including CBA-Albany (51-7) and Newburgh (47-13) in the state quarterfinals and semis, respectively.

Selecting an MVP would be an arduous task, because, as the state-ranked (No.3) Rams have done all season, they personified the word T-E-A-M from start to finish. After 27 years on the Carmel sideline, Coach Cayea turned the community and student body -- #CarmelCrazies -- into a football-frenzied town, which, oftentimes, played second fiddle to the former juggernaut that was New Rochelle for decades. Carmel's last venture into the state tournament was 1998, something that wasn't lost on Cayea's Rams.

"We wanted this for Coach Cayea more than anything," said Ram senior RB Dylan



Carmel captain TJ Fusco hoists NYS Class AA title plaque after Rams romped Bennett Academy 42-14 at Carrier Dome in Syracuse Saturday.

Shields, who was as close to MVP as anyone after scoring three touchdowns and gaining 156 yards on nine carries, including a game-sealing 90-yard jaunt. Shields added five tackles on defense, a stout unit that held state-ranked (No.5) Bennett's 2,000-yard rusher Dominic Allen to 39 yards on 13 totes.

"He's one of the greatest coaches to ever coach in this state. He's been here for nearly 30 years and we finally got to do it for him. He makes it very hard to prepare for us. We have a lot of different skill players who can



Carmel DB Nick Rosaforte makes most of this blitz with a sack of Bennett QB in Rams' 42-12 NYS Class AA title win.

get the job done behind an amazing offensive line, and defensively we were the best in the state. This is a once-in-a-generation type of team that had high expectations, so to finally reach them this feels great."

After going 5-1 during the COVID-shortened 2021 spring season, Carmel set the bar high and took its preparation to the next level. Sessions were crisp. The scout

team bought in. The leaders led by example and accountability, and the brotherhood became trustworthy.

"We had a goal today and no one was going to stop us from reaching it," senior QB Kevin Dall said after rushing for 64 yards on nine carries while orchestrating the offense that outgained Bennett 257-42 on the ground,
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Carmel DL Dominick Telesco takes his fumble recovery deep into Bennett territory in Rams' 42-12 NYS Class AA title win Saturday at Carrier Dome in Syracuse.



Carmel RB Dylan Shields was one of many Rams who could have been named MVP in NYSPHSAA Class AA title win Saturday at Carrier Dome.

Sports

Class AA Grid Notebook



Carmel RB Josh Massi prepares to blow up a would-be Bennett tackler before scoring TD in Rams NYS Class AA title win Saturday at Carrier Dome.

continued from previous page

including Dall's hurdling 15-yard effort that set up a score. "I'm not sure we had the actual vision of a state championship in mind when the season started, but we got here and it just feels awesome. Nothing compares to this. We had no clue how this season was going to turn out at the beginning of the year, but it turned out to be a sectional title and once we got that we weren't getting denied."

Senior DB Vincent Mazzamuto (7 tackles), who played his best ball in the postseason, forced two early turnovers, one off a strip-sack, a second on an interception. Carmel turned those two short fields into 14 points and a 14-0 halftime lead behind TD trots from senior RB Josh Massi (from five yards) and Shields (from 21).

With the game still very much in doubt early in the third quarter, Cayea went deep into his bag of tricks and unleashed the kind of disciplined chicanery few teams can execute. Ram senior WR Andrew Fiore's fourth-down reverse, optioned into a 38-yard TD strike to senior TE T.J. Fusco for a 21-0 lead after senior K Nick Sodano's PAT (7 of 7 on the day). Sodano planted Bennett deep in its own territory all game long and added a touchdown-saving tackle on the lone kick the Rams failed to cover. Nick Rosaforte (11) and Massi (8) led the defense in tackles. Menacing Ram DL Dominick Telesco added two tackles, a pair of sacks and a fumble recovery.

"We're just a bunch of brothers," said a humbled Massi, who finished with 26 yards and a score. "We never want to get



Carmel WR Andrew Fiore leaves dudes in dust in Rams' 42-12 NYS Class AA title win over Bennett Academy.

outworked. We always play with heart. I'm going to stay a little chill right now, but I'm definitely going to go home and celebrate with my brothers."

After Bennett finally got on the board with a third-quarter score, Carmel put additional distance between the two state powers with a pair of touchdown drives that blew the doors off the dome. Junior FB Nick Rosaforte powered in from two yards out for a 28-6 lead with 3:00 to go in the third, and sophomore RB Matt Risley punched in another for a 36-6 lead with 8:29 to play.

Bennett then changed its game-plan and consistently went to the air, tacking on another score before Shields went 90 untouched yards for the final margin.

Cayea admitted the emotions of these last two years -- when he was unceremoniously dismissed after the 2019 sectional runner-up season, only to be rehired -- were on his mind, but procuring the program's biggest achievement weighed much heavier.

"This is something I've always dreamed about," Cayea said. "New Rochelle has always been a juggernaut for us, so this means the world to us to finally get it done. This is for all the guys that came before them, who came up a little short. These guys were just able to finish it off for the community. They love their football in this town, and I'm just proud to be their coach."

"We've been a team all year long," Cayea added. "The past 13 weeks it's been different guys every week. I told the kids since week one, if you want to win championships it starts on the defensive end. You've got to swarm the ball and be great tacklers and be disciplined. Our defense has been outstanding all year long, and our offense feeds off of it. I can't say enough about

this team. Being a coach, you come to these big games, so you just want to be part of one. You hope that at some point in your career, you get the chance to do something like this. You dream about it, and to share it with my family, and my son Trevor being on the team, we've been through a lot the last few years, and they've been supportive and always back me through the years, so you know we're going to celebrate this one."

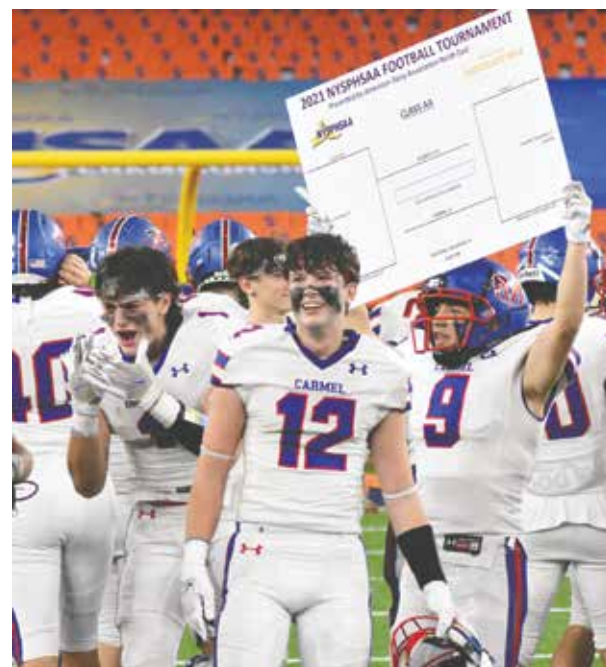
Ram DB Trevor Cayea, who had four tackles, was appreciative of the father/son bond and the experience of sharing a state and section title.

"This means a lot to me and my family, especially my dad," Trevor Cayea said. "I can't even explain how this feels to share it with him. As a family, we're going to kick back and enjoy this."

With the biggest throng of fans to turn out at the Carrier Dome last weekend, the Cayea clan won't be alone in celebration. Buy that man a drink! You've been #CayeaO'd!



Rams were quick to get with the #CarmelCrazies after winning 1st NYSPHSAA grid title in Putnam County history Saturday at Carrier Dome in Syracuse.



Rams Vinny Mazzamuto (1), Trevor Cayea (12) Jake Elner (9) begin to revel in the glory of Carmel's first NYSPHSAA Class A grid title.

In Heartbreaking Fashion, Somers Falls Point Shy of State Title



Somers' Owen Kerins, Ravi Dass, Matt Brennan and Michael Bookall celebrate a Dass TD in Tuskers' 32-31 NYS Class A title loss to CBA Friday at Carrier Dome.

By Ray Gallagher
Examiner Sports Editor @Directrays

SYRACUSE -- Somers High grid Coach Anthony DeMatteo's decision to go for two points and the victory in the waning moments of the NYSPHSAA Class A title game last Friday at the Carrier Dome will be second-guessed by opposing coaches, media, fans and just about everybody outside of Coach D's Tuskers. Not because it wasn't

the right thing to do, but because only half of the play callers and arm-chair coaches in the country have the stones to pull the trigger DeMatteo and his staff did. Somers played to win, and there's no shame in that.

To a Tusker, there was little if any doubt after RB Matt Kapica's one yard TD run with 1:19 left that Somers (12-1) would run a play it had designed in August for this particular moment. But Section 3 champion CBA-Syracuse had it defended perfectly,



Somers RB Matt Kapica finds seam for plus yards in Tuskers' 32-31 NYS Class A title loss to CBA Friday at Carrier Dome.

RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS



Losing is never easy but losing in the NYS football finals was as tough as it gets for a classy Somers club last Friday at Syracuse; the epitome of brothers -- Francesco Gioffre and Johnny Crecco-- caring for each other in the toughest of times.

taking Tusker QB Matt Fitzsimons off his line and out of the pocket where a bevy of defenders forced an errant throw, which was picked off by CBA's Jason Brunson in the end zone, thus preserving the Brother's 32-31 state championship win over the distraught Tuskers. It was CBA's first state title since 2004 and Section 3's first title since 2017.

"After Kapica scored the touchdown we called a timeout, and all the players and coaches wanted to go for two and the win," said Somers senior LB/TE Ethan Krauss, who the play was designed to go to. "We

practiced this play every week since August. CBA covered it perfectly and it just didn't go our way. We knew coming in they had some guys and we tried our best. We did what a lot of people believed we couldn't do and I'm proud of my brothers. They're private and we're public so in my eyes we are the best public school in Class A."

As tough a loss as it was, Somers' big-play capability kept the Tuskers in the game, including senior RB Ravi Dass' 85-yard kick return right before the half, which cut

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Somers' Luke Kennedy (6) tries to console teammate Anthony Carino after Tuskers' 32-31 NYS Class A title loss to CBA Friday at Carrier Dome.

Sports

Class A Grid Notebook



Somers senior RB Ravi Dass chugs final yards of his electrifying 85-yard kick return in Tuskers' 32-31 NYS Class A title loss to CBA Friday at Carrier Dome.



Somers QB Matt Fitzsimons surveys scene on the much-discussed two-point conversion attempt in Tuskers' 32-31 NYS Class A title loss to CBA Friday at Carrier Dome.

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the Christian Brother's lead to 16-15 after Luke Savino's easy two-point conversion. State-ranked (No.5) CBA (9-3) began the game with a 19-play, nine-minute drive, then connected on a 50-yard TD strike with 20 seconds left in the first half. In between, Dass (11 rushes, 50 yards) scored off a nine-yard run to make it 8-7. The state-ranked

(No.2) Tuskers answered each time CBA scored and eventually took a 22-16 third-quarter lead off Trey Mancuso's 26-yard jet to paydirt.

"Tough loss and this will sting for a while," said senior DB/WR Mancuso, who had six grabs for 74 yards. "Hats off to CBA. That's a great team over there. That being said, I am extremely proud of my brothers and how they battled. We never quit down to the last man. We had a chance, but it just didn't work out for us in the end. We were confident in our decision and we as a TEAM will live with the choice that we

collectively made."

CBA's vaunted passing attack featured several D-I receiving prospects and junior QB Jordan Rae, who found 10 different receivers and finished 25 of 35 for 346 yards and threw three touchdowns to three different receivers. That phase of the CBA game plan brought about a 10-point lead deep into the fourth when things looked very bleak for Somers. But the never-say-die Tuskers (12-1) responded with consecutive scores and a shot for the win. Savino's 37-yard field goal cut the deficit to seven points, 32-25, before Kapica's touchdown run with

1:19 left brought them within one. CBA kneeled out the waning seconds, denying the Tuskers their second NYS title since 2016.

"I tip my hat to those wide outs and their QB," Somers junior OL/DL Jake Polito said. "Those are by far the best athletes I've seen in my high school career and in a few years from now you're gonna see those kids on TV playing on Saturdays. I'm extremely proud to call myself a Somers Tusker. That play call was a reflection of this town, these coaches, and the players. I love these coaches and they mean the world to me. I'm sure the rest of the team feels the same way. So when coach Ant asked what we wanted to do it was a no-brainer. We wanted it. Unfortunately, it didn't work out, but I just want it to be known that these coaches are second to none, not only as football coaches, but as my family members. I love this town. I love this team, and most importantly I love these coaches win, lose or draw."

Krauss (9 tackles), Francesco Gioffre (8 tackles), TJ Olifers (6 tackles), Luke Kennedy (4 tackles, sack), Mancuso (4 tackles) and Johnny Crecco (4 tackles, sack) led the Somers defense, which faced its toughest test of the season.



Somers DL Jake Polito reacts to key fumble recovery with teammate Ethan Krauss in Tuskers' 32-31 NYS Class A title loss to CBA Friday at Carrier Dome.



Somers RB Luke Savino gains corner in Tuskers' 32-31 NYS Class A title loss to CBA Friday at Carrier Dome.

Sports

Early Lead Disappears as Pleasantville Falls in State Final

For a little while on Saturday afternoon, it sure seemed as though the Pleasantville Panthers possessed what it would take to bring down the top-ranked football team in the state.

The Panthers' sophomore star, Daniel Picart, had already found his way into the end zone for a pair of touchdowns not long after the game's opening kickoff and a surprising 12-point lead gave their fans reason to believe a second state championship plaque would soon be headed to the school's gym lobby.

But the Panthers never scored again after Picart's electrifying 79-yard punt return just past the midway point of the first quarter and the Maine-Endwell Spartans eventually took command on the way to a 21-12 victory in the Class B state final at the Carrier Dome in Syracuse. For Pleasantville, which had arrived with a perfect 12-0 record, it was a crushing end to a season that exceeded all expectations.

Facing a Spartan team that had scored at least 40 points in a game seven times this year, Pleasantville began the day with poise and purpose. With the Panthers setting aside their usually reliable running game, quarterback Michael LaCapria engineered a seven-play, 71-yard opening drive by completing five consecutive passes, highlighted by his perfect deep toss down the right sideline that fell right into the arms of Picart in stride for a 42-yard touchdown with just a couple of minutes elapsed.

Unfortunately for Pleasantville, the point-after kick by John McCarthy, who hadn't missed one all season, was blocked and the Panthers had to settle for a 6-0 early lead. Perhaps inspired by the team's offensive fireworks, the Panther defense then forced a three-and-out for Maine-Endwell.

Picart fielded the line-drive punt near his own 20-yard line, cut toward his right and



Pleasantville QB Michael LaCapria surveys field in Panthers' 21-12 NYSPHSAA Class B title loss Saturday at Carrier Dome in Syracuse.

found nothing but clear sailing all the way to the end zone. Just six and a half minutes into the contest, Pleasantville suddenly had a 12-0 advantage.

The Panthers' try for a two-point conversion was stopped and, moments later, so was all their early momentum. Spartan star Mike Mancini returned the ensuing kickoff 90 yards, getting a couple of blocks and then bursting past everyone like a rocket untouched all the way to paydirt. Jack Hennessey's PAT cut the Pleasantville lead to just 12-7 with 5:17 remaining in the opening quarter.

On their next possession, the Panthers kept the ball for over five minutes, but the drive finally stalled at the Maine-Endwell 21-yard line a minute into the second quarter. McCarthy soon recovered a Spartan fumble, but P'ville wasn't able to take advantage.

Later in the quarter, another long Picart punt return was called back because of a penalty. In the final seconds, the Panthers' Kieran Cotter picked off a pass, assuring that Pleasantville would take a lead into the locker room at halftime.

The prospect of a Panther state championship began to dim with Maine-Endwell's first possession of the second half. The Spartans went 61 yards in nine plays, taking the lead when quarterback Mancini, on fourth-and-six, rolled to his right, got to the sideline and then spun away from Dom Matica before bouncing off Aidan Finnegan on the way to a spectacular 33-yard touchdown run.

Hennessey added the point-after and four and a half minutes into the second half Maine-Endwell had its first lead of the day, 14-12. The Spartans maintained their two-point lead as the third quarter came to an end, but they were in the midst of a grueling, time-consuming drive that would all but seal the Panthers' fate.

Nearly five minutes into the fourth quarter, Mancini dropped back to pass and found Aidan McHugh free past



Pleasantville RB Daniel Picart sheds a Maine-Endwell tackler in Panthers' 21-12 NYSPHSAA Class B title loss Saturday at Carrier Dome in Syracuse.

a pair of P'ville backs in the left side of the end zone for an 18-yard touchdown. With the kick from Hennessey, the Panthers now faced a nine-point deficit. Maine-Endwell had used up seven vital minutes with the 13-play drive that started near midfield.

The Panthers' last real gasp came with just over three minutes remaining when a pass from LaCapria, who connected on 26 of 39 for 242 yards in a dazzling final game, fell incomplete on fourth down. Despite a dozen receptions by Picart for 152 yards and six catches each by Erik Coleman and Emmet McDermott, Pleasantville was unable to put points on the board over the game's final 41 minutes and the dream of a state championship faded away.

-Andy Jacobs



Don't be surprised if these Pleasantville frowns are turned upside down next year when the Panthers return in 2022.



Pleasantville warriors Michael LaCapria and Joseph Alesawy know the end is near during 21-21 NYS Class B finals.

RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS



Pleasantville WR Emmott McDermott battles for yards in Panthers' 21-12 NYSPHSAA Class B title loss Saturday at Carrier Dome in Syracuse.



Pleasantville DL Cooper Kittsley wraps up a Maine-Endwell runner in Panthers' 21-12 NYSPHSAA Class B title loss Saturday at Carrier Dome in Syracuse.

Sports



Panther senior Nick Paternostro does some celebrating in the victory over Briarcliff at Parkway Field.



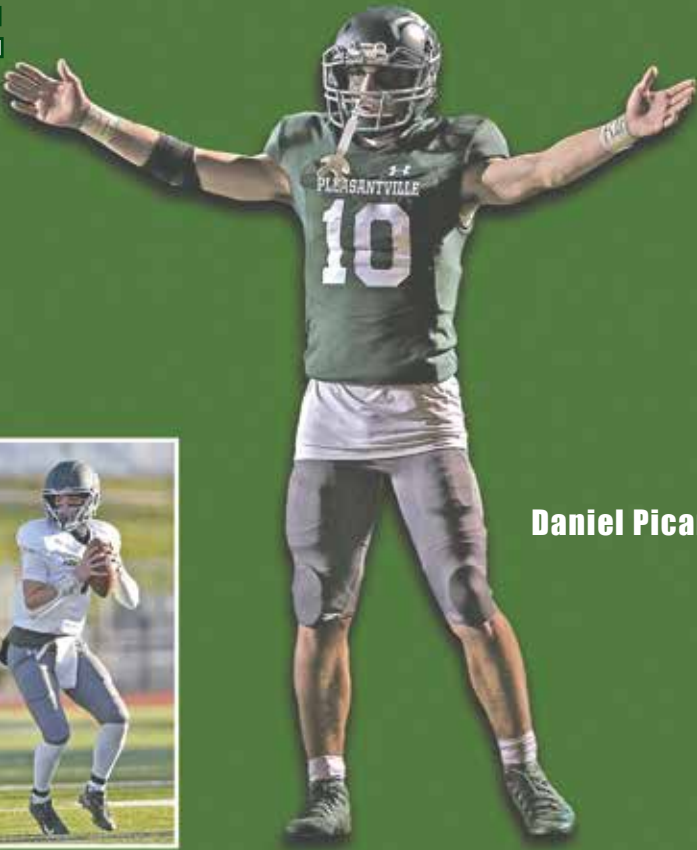
Aidan Picart tries to elude a tackle in the Panthers' victory over Bronxville.




Sophomore sensation Daniel Picart carries the ball in a home win at Parkway Field.

PLEASANTVILLE PANTHERS 2021

Section 1, Class B Champion New York State Finalist




Daniel Picart



Kieran Cotter



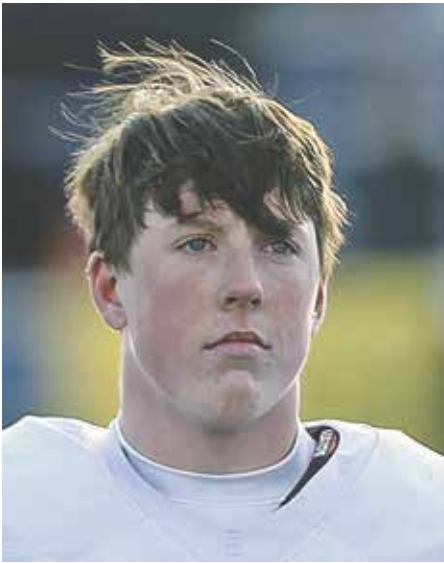
Erik Coleman



Michael LaCapria



Junior lineman Joseph Alesawy gets set for the Panthers' state semifinal against Section 2's Ravena at Middletown High School.



John McCarthy's last-second field goal lifted the Panthers past Port Jervis in the state playoffs.



Pleasantville seniors Dom Matica (left) and Michael LaCapria proudly display the team's championship plaque after defeating Nanuet in the Section 1 title game.



Kieran Cotter easily steps into the end zone for a touchdown in the Panthers' state-regional win over Port Jervis.



The Panther defense converges to make a tackle en route to a home win midway through the regular season.



Head coach Tony Becerra has now taken two Panther teams up to Syracuse to play in the state final.

Examiner Sports

Hearts of Iron!



Somers, Pleasantville Have Mettle Tested, Fall in NYS Grid Finals

RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS

Class A Somers and Class B Pleasantville represented Section 1 to the best of their abilities last weekend at the Carrier Dome in Syracuse where an emotion Derek Marcus' Somers Tuskers suffered a 32-31 NYSPHSAA championship setback to Section 3 champion Christian Brothers Academy Friday before Pleasantville's Joseph Alesawy's Panthers had their hearts ripped out in similar fashion during a 21-12 NYS title loss to Section 4 champion Maine-Endwell Saturday... see Class A/B Grid Notebooks