

from the bottom to the

# TOP

**2025 MSHSAA CLASS 6  
STATE CHAMPIONSHIP**

Link 2 Lee's Summit

January 2026

It was a season straight out of a movie script. In a state full of powerhouse teams picked by everyone to pass them by, the Lee's Summit High School Tigers persevered through injuries and a dismal 0-4 start to capture a football state championship for the first time in the school's 72-year history.

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# WHO'S REALLY COUNTING?

**72** years

Remember what we said on the cover — this is the first state football championship in Lee's Summit High School's 72-year history? Yeah, there's a caveat there. It depends on where you start counting. We had a fun conversation with the awesome folks at LSHS and LSR7 to answer this question of history. The final conclusion was we're all "very comfortable" with the count beginning in 1953. Here's a look at some of the other dates we found.

**115** years

**1953:** LSHS, the OG Tiger High, first opened its doors and celebrated its first graduating class.

**129** years

**1910:** What is now known as Greenwood Elementary opened its doors as a grammar school and high school.

**152** years

**1896:** First recorded football game mentioning Lee's Summit was a victory over Harrisonville.

**1873:** The first historical reference to a Lee's Summit High school, which prompted the district to hold a 150th celebration in 2023.

# Link 2 Lee's Summit

This commemorative special section celebrating Lee's Summit High School's 2025 MSHSAA Class 6 State Football Championship is a publication of *Link 2 Lee's Summit*.

Telling local stories. Promoting local business. Serving our community. That tag line isn't just a catchy phrase. Those three statements are actually the pillars by which we measure everything we do at *Link 2 Lee's Summit*.

We believe in the importance of a hyper local focus on the people of Lee's Summit, the businesses they own, operate and frequent, as well as highlighting the community's nonprofits and the service they provide.

We're proud to be the only publication 100 percent dedicated to the Lee's Summit

community and telling its stories through a variety of mediums and events. *Link 2 Lee's Summit* reaches more than 12,000 residents (roughly 10% of the population) through its web site, podcast (*Lee's Summit Town Hall*) weekly newsletter and social media channels. The podcast and web site offer a specific focus on promoting local businesses and championing community service by spotlighting the many local nonprofits serving Lee's Summit and how residents can support them.

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COMMENTARY

# Surprised?

Looking back, maybe the Tigers' season didn't come from nowhere



Maybe we should have seen this coming.

While covering the Lee's Summit Tigers football team in 2024, I couldn't help but notice a lot of the key players were juniors and this led me to believe the 2025 season may be a memorable one with so much talent in one class.

While the season certainly turned out to be very memorable, the way the season unfolded was not how anyone predicted. My first report about the Tigers was a tough season-opening

loss at Liberty. And tacking on to the loss, were a bevy of injuries to key players.

Later in the season, I was sad to see the Tigers at 0-4 and searching for their first win. But, man, once they found their way to the win column, they just didn't leave.

That first win came at home against cross-town rival Lee's Summit West. The 33-15 win set the tone for the Tigers to run the table in 2025 and capture the school's first MSHSAA

Class 6 State Football Championship. The Tigers vs. Titans match up was the featured game for *Link 2 Lee's Summit* and afterward, no one was talking about a lengthy post-season run.

That game sent Lee's Summit sprinting into the post-season at 5-4. The five-game win streak was capped by a 37-16 win over their other cross-town rival — the state-ranked Lee's Summit North Broncos.

*see COMMENTARY on next page*



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# COMMENTARY: 2025 season was quite a ride



Photo courtesy Ron Wight

The Tigers celebrate their first MSHSAA Class 6 District Championship since 1985 after defeating North Kansas City 42-21 on Nov. 14.

A No. 1 seed in the district bracket, gave the Tigers a bye week to prepare for the playoffs and what became a much-hyped rematch against North. The game turned out to be a hold your breath thriller as the Tigers looked to win and move on. Lee's Summit led 20-14 at the half, but found themselves down 33-32 with just :57 seconds left after a Broncos 18-yard TD run. I witnessed from the sidelines, a Tigers defender with his head down on the field as the thought was we just saw the game-winning score.

But cliches exist for a reason and as the saying goes 'Not so fast.' The Tigers would go from their own 42-yard line to the Broncos' 4 with just 4.9 seconds left. During an ensuing timeout, I left the south end zone area to go to the north end zone where the Tigers were setting up for a 22-yard field goal.

On the sideline, I saw Lee's Summit Athletic Director Kit Anderson and Athletic Secretary Kristi Schieldt excit-

edly watching as the ball would hit the left pylon and go through to seal the 35-33 win.

Next up, the district title game against North Kansas City. The Hornets were feeling good after rolling through much of the season and playing on their home field. But the Tigers' run game was in championship form as they ran to a 42-21 victory to improve to 7-4 and capture the school's first district title since 1985.

Tigers fans were thrilled to learn afterward there would be another home game as they would host Liberty in the state quarterfinal round with a chance to avenge that Week 1 loss.

The Tigers and Blue Jays each scored a touchdown in each of the opening quarters and went into halftime tied at 14-14.

But those were the final scores Lee's Summit's defense would allow as the Tigers marched on to a 24-14 win and

a semifinal showdown against Jackson at Bud Hertzog Stadium.

The playoff game against Jackson was played on a Saturday afternoon on Nov. 29 where the weather would be a factor. Cold temps combined with a light drizzle meant hoodies and gloves for even the on-field officials.

Jackson entered the game undefeated at 12-0. The visiting grandstands were full as many of their fans were expecting a win and a trip to the state title game in St. Joseph.

But the Tigers would outlast Jackson, scoring the last three touchdowns of the game in a 35-28 victory. And just like that aforementioned '85 Tigers squad, they were punching their ticket to the state championship game.

In 1985, the Tigers football team would end the season as the runner up in Class 5. Many observers felt this year the Tigers would again end up as the state runners up as they faced an undefeated Nixa Eagles team.

For the first time, the championship was played at Spratt Memorial

Stadium on the campus of Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph. Fans were not disappointed as the two teams opened the game throwing hay-makers and trading touchdowns.

The Tigers enjoyed a 14-7 lead after the first quarter, but trailed by a touchdown, 28-21, at the half. The fourth quarter would begin with the game tied at 35-35 and the Tigers, Preston Hatfield already accumulating 309 rushing yards. He wasn't done.

His record-breaking performance would end up making school history, and combined with some shut-down defense, the school nabbed the elusive championship with a 41-37 heart-pounding victory.

After starting with four straight losses, the Tigers finished the season with 10 straight wins, including back-to-back wins over undefeated teams seemingly destined to win a championship.

Thanks to the class of 2026, the Lee's Summit Tigers recorded plenty of history in 2025. What a wild and wonderful ride. None of us were surprised. Right?



Lee's Summit High School senior Peyton Hatfield sprints into the end zone during the Tigers' 35-28 semifinal win over Jackson on Nov. 29 at Bud Hertzog Stadium in Lee's Summit.

Photo courtesy Ron Wight





Photo courtesy Ron Wight

Lee's Summit junior Lance Reid (No. 61) celebrates a Preston Hatfield touchdown during the Tigers' 35-28 semifinal win over Jackson, Nov. 29 at Bud Hertzog Stadium.



Photos courtesy Ron Wight

ABOVE: The Tigers' Preston Hatfield outruns the defense during Lee's Summit's 24-14 quarterfinal win over Liberty. The win came after Liberty defeated Lee's Summit in week 1 of the regular season.

RIGHT: A trio of Tigers, including senior Anthony Velazquez (No. 42) and senior Marz Guein (No. 3) make a key stop during the 42-21 district championship win at North Kansas City.



Lee's Summit senior Isaiah McConnell tackles a Nixa receiver short of the end zone during the 2025 MSHSAA Class 6 State Championship game in St. Joseph.

Photos courtesy Ron Wight







TOP LEFT: The Lee’s Summit student body showed up in force to watch the Tigers grab Lee’s Summit’s first state football title in school history.

TOP MIDDLE: Senior Peyton Hatfield (No. 1) stiff arms a defender as he races downfield during the Tigers’ championship game win over previously undefeated Nixa.

MIDDLE: Lee’s Summit senior receiver Karsten Fiene flips head over heels during the Tigers’ unprecedented win.

BOTTOM LEFT: Senior Preston Hatfield receives a kick during what was an offensive battle for the MSHSAA Class 6 State Championship. Lee’s Summit and Nixa traded touchdowns for the game’s first four series.

Photos courtesy  
Ron Wight



TOP RIGHT: Lee’s Summit linemen and their position coach celebrate on the field after the championship win.

BOTTOM MIDDLE: Senior Holden Warring (No. 55) leads the way for senior Peyton Hatfield (No. 1) for some tough yards up the middle.

BOTTOM RIGHT: With his twin’s help, senior Preston Hatfield (No. 2) slips past Nixa defenders for a touchdown in Lee’s Summit’s 41-37 comeback win the MSHSAA Class 6 State Championship on the campus of Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph.

Photos courtesy  
Ron Wight





## 'LET PICASSO PAINT'

This was the line from LSHS head coach Todd Miller when asked about game planning for senior quarterback Preston Hatfield, who set MSHSAA State Championship game records with his performance against Nixa.

**Carries:** 33  
**Yards:** 457  
**Yards per carry:** 13.8

Photo courtesy Ron Wight



# UNLIKELY HEROES

## Tigers steal spotlight with title run

By Fred Liggett

Playing high school football in the largest classification in the state will gain you some attention, but the Lee's Summit Tigers' on-field play captured plenty of attention after securing the teams first State Championship in school history.

Playing the Missouri Class 6 State title game in prime time on Saturday night, Dec. 6 the Tigers defeated Nixa 41-37 and did it in a record-breaking way.

No team in Missouri history had

started a season 0-4 and went on to win a State title. No player in State championship game history had run for 457 yards, which senior Preston Hatfield did. Hatfield's performance on 33 carries broke the old mark set by Kyren Williams in 2018. Williams is now in the NFL carrying the ball for the Los Angeles Rams. Hatfield left the field with a record breaking mark of 13.8 yards per carry.

Before the state title game vs Nixa came to an end, the talk about the Tigers had already started. During the game broadcast, the lead announcer commented on the work done by Tigers linebacker Drew

Benassi. Benassi was described as "leaving the field with a truckload of tackles." Praise was showered on receiver Karsten Fiene after his game-winning touchdown run by media members from Springfield. These members, while covering Nixa all season, commented on "how hard Fiene" runs.

During post-game comments Tigers head coach Todd Miller talked about the team to state-wide media members saying "We play hard, harder and longer than the opponent."

see **SPOTLIGHT** on next page

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Photo courtesy Ron Wight

Lee’s Summit defensive back Isaiah McConnell makes a tackle during the Nov. 14 MSHSAA District championship game at North Kansas City.

## SPOTLIGHT: State-wide media heap praise on LSHS squad

When asked to describe Hatfield’s rushing success Miller said Hatfield is like Picasso.

“Let Picasso paint, snap the ball to number 2 and let him work.”

Once back home in Lee’s Summit, one of the first things said about the newly crowned state champions was at the annual Simone Awards, held on Tuesday Dec. 9.

Preston Hatfield was named to the All Simone team at the ceremony held at Platte County High School. The KC Sports Network named Preston Hatfield the KC Metro player of the week and had Hatfield on as a guest for their high school sports show, who also awarded the senior with some tacos from Tacos 4 Life.

And then there’s Kansas City based

ABC TV affiliate KMBC-TV9, who sent news reporter Eric Graves to Lee’s Summit High School on Monday, Dec. 8 to complete a feature on the newly crowned State Champions. While at his alma mater, Graves wore the letter jacket he earned while a Tiger. A “homer” view one rarely sees on local television that added another fun aspect to all the attention thrown the Tigers’ way that week.

By Thursday, Dec. 11, plans were announced there would be a Tigers championship rally held on Dec. 20 inside the new Green Street event space in downtown Lee’s Summit.

While a truckload of tackles and Tacos 4 Life sounds good no matter who you are, or where you are from, everyone will be calling the Lee’s Summit Tigers State 2025 Champions.









Photo courtesy Bobbie Sue Photography





the road to a  
**CHAMPIONSHIP**

1

L  
13-21  
Aug. 29 @  
Liberty

6

W  
35-7  
Oct. 3 vs.  
Park Hill South

11

W  
42-21  
Nov. 14 vs. North KC  
(District Championship)

2

L  
7-28  
Sept. 5 @  
Blue Springs

7

W  
31-14  
Oct. 10 @  
Raymore-Peculiar

12

W  
24-14  
Nov. 21 vs. Liberty  
(State Quarterfinal)

3

L  
7-31  
Sept. 12 vs.  
Blue Springs South

8

W  
28-25  
Oct. 17 vs.  
Staley

13

W  
35-28  
Nov. 29 vs. Jackson  
(State Semifinal)

4

L  
34-35  
Sept. 19 @  
Liberty North

9

W  
37-16  
Oct. 24 @  
Lee's Summit North

14

W  
41-37  
Dec. 6 vs. Nixa  
(State Championship)

5

W  
33-15  
Sept. 26 vs.  
Lee's Summit West

10

W  
35-33  
Nov. 7 vs. LS North  
(District Semifinal)





the 2025 Lee's Summit  
**TIGERS**

0 - Julius Jones Sr., ATH	18 - Xavier Salinas Jr., DB/WR	39 - Carter Lee So., DB	65 - Raheem Smith So., OL
1 - Peyton Hatfield Sr., WR/DB	19 - Matthew Ahrens Fr., ATH	40 - Wyatt Mitchell Jr., WR	66 - Nick Bowman Jr., OL/DL
2 - Preston Hatfield Sr., QB/DB	20 - Braylon Kenser Jr., WR/DB	42 - Anthony Velazquez Sr., LB	70 - Andy O'Brien So., OL
3 - Marz Guein Sr., DB/ATH	21 - Tre Flowers Jr., RB	43 - Omar Madourie Sr., DL	74 - Jimmy Keller So., OL
4 - Jacob Hall Sr., WR	22 - Connor Smith Jr., LS/LB	44 - Kona Notestine Jr., DL	75 - Marco Wilson Jr., OL
5 - Karsten Fiene Sr., WRDB	23 - Isaiah McConnell Sr., DB	47 - Devin Noel Sr., DL	78 - Max Keller So., OL
6 - Nathan Dingle Fr., DE	24 - Mason Gibbs Sr., LB	49 - Julian Manriquez Sr., TE	79 - Khaelen Kwi Jr., DT
7 - Christian Dahn Jr., QB	25 - Donovan Walton Fr., LB	50 - Tyson Allen Sr., OL	81 - Carson Gattenby So., WR
8 - Robert Smith Sr., DB	26 - Wyatt Kinnan Fr., LB	51 - Jayden King Sr., DL	82 - Gerald Austin Fr., WR
9 - Mason Kinnan Sr., LB	27 - Ian Gannon Fr., LB	52 - Jax Swope Jr., OL	83 - Jayden Turner So., WR
10 - Max Trillo So., TE	29 - Jordan King Sr., DL	53 - Hayden Hinkle Jr., DL	84 - Lavel Bowels So., WR
11 - Ezra Marshall Fr., DE	31 - Harold Sterne Fr., LB	54 - Will Seiller Jr., OL	85 - Dawson Clymore Jr., DE
12 - Drew Benassi Jr., DB/ATH	32 - Lawson St. John So., DB	55 - Holden Waring Sr., OL/DL	86 - Riggs Poos Fr., TE
13 - Micah Patterson So., DB	33 - Carter Duffey Jr., DB	56 - Teaan Templeton Sr., DL	87 - Grady Ferguson Jr., TE
14 - Sebastian Okolo Sr., TE	34 - Grant James So., LB	57 - Mason Brasington Jr., OL/DL	88 - Joe Willbanks Jr., DL
15 - Dayton Masters Sr., QB/DB	35 - Sullivan McCarthy So., LB/K	61 - Lance Reid Jr., OL	
16 - Jaxson Fierro Fr., ATH	36 - Miles Ker So., TE/LB	63 - Isaac Dahn So., OL	
17 - Blake Wilson Fr., QB	37 - Ace Elliot So., DL	64 - Jack Keller So., OL	



MSHSAA CLASS 6 STATE CHAMPIONSHIP — LEE'S SUMMIT 41, NIXA 37

# THE BIG GAME

## Lee's Summit completes historic turnaround

**By Fred Liggett**

History has been made.

The Lee's Summit High School football team claimed its school's first MSHSAA Class 6 State Football Championship Saturday night with a come-from-behind 41-37 win over Nixa at Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph.

The late comeback was fitting for a season that began with an 0-4 start and closed with a 10-game winning streak. The Tigers, who finished with a 10-4 record, had to overcome a 28-21 deficit at halftime and trailed 37-35 in the fourth quarter — a familiar position as Lee's Summit trailed in all four of its playoff games.

The Class 6 title game against undefeated Nixa (13-1) began with the Tigers having the ball first. A 73-yard scoring drive that took just over two minutes to complete ended on a 45-yard touchdown run by senior Preston Hatfield.

Nixa tied the game at 7-7 just 2:30 later on a 40-yard scoring pass. With 2:37 left in the first quarter, Hatfield found the end zone again, this time from 12 yards out, to give the Tigers a 14-7 lead after the first quarter.

The second quarter gave fans numerous reasons to cheer, starting with the first play when

Nixa quarterback Adam McKnight fired a 5-yard touchdown pass to tie the game at 14-14. Just 64 seconds later, the Tigers had the lead back at 21-14 thanks to a 7-yard run from Hatfield. The Eagles tied the game again on a 21-yard scoring pass with 7:53 left in the half.

The first big break in the game went the Eagles' way as they recovered a Tigers fumble at their own 36-yard line. The Eagles took their first lead of the game on a touchdown pass to Elijah Deal with under two minutes left in the opening half. The Eagles' 28-21 lead stood at halftime.

The second half kicked off with Nixa having the ball first, and it was immediately followed by the game's first three-and-out. Following the Nixa punt, the Tigers were stuck at their own 3-yard line. Two plays later, the game was tied again thanks to an electrifying 89-yard touchdown run by Preston Hatfield.

The score remained deadlocked at 28-28 until Nixa got an 18-yard scoring pass to Randy Flint. The Eagles enjoyed a 35-28 lead with 3:50 left in the third quarter. Just two minutes later, Preston Hatfield found the end zone again on a 34-yard touchdown run, tying

*see GAME on next page*

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# GAME: After 40 years, LSHS returns to title game & walk away Missouri State Champions

the score at 35-35 heading into the fourth quarter.

So far in this high-scoring title game, every score had come via a touchdown.

This changed with 8:10 left in the game when a bad snap sailed over the punter's head and through the end zone. The resulting safety gave Nixa a narrow 37-35 lead.

A defensive stand from the Tigers gave the ball back to Lee's Summit with under six minutes left to play. Thanks to Karsten Fiene's 1-yard touchdown plunge, the Tigers took a 41-37 lead with 5:24

left to play.

After a failed two-point conversion, the Eagles got the ball at their own 30-yard line needing a touchdown. The Eagles advanced the ball into Tigers territory, but the drive stalled. The Eagles turned the ball over on downs, and the Tigers ran out the remaining time on the clock, securing the 41-37 victory and a chance to celebrate new territory for their school.

Preston Hatfield set a new MSHSAA Show-Me Bowl record with his 457-yard effort on just 33 carries.



Photo courtesy Ron Wight

Lee's Summit seniors Mason Gibbs (left), Karsten Fiene and their teammates hoist the MSHSAA Class 6 State Football Championship trophy near mid-field as the celebrations got going after the Tigers' 41-37 win over previously unbeaten Nixa on Dec. 6 at Spratt Stadium on the campus of Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph.



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# IN THE LOCKER ROOM

Peek inside the team's post-game celebrations







Photos courtesy Benny Palmer and Lee’s Summit High School

PREVIOUS PAGE: The Lee’s Summit High School football coaching staff shows off their championship medals inside the locker room after the MSHSAA Class 6 Show-Me Bowl in St. Joseph. The Tigers coaches are: Head coach Todd Miller; and assistant coaches Benny Palmer, Jason Wright, Antonio Oliver, Jason Jones, Davis McElroy, Dom Gicinto, Tyler Terrance, Chris Waxler, Tony Kapustka, Ed Morse, Montrae Strickland, Rick Shriver, Karl Park, Alex Kimble and Terrell Gicinto.

ABOVE: After celebrating on the field in front of their Lee’s Summit fans, the Lee’s Summit High School varsity football team took the celebrations inside the locker room before boarding buses back home from Spratt Stadium on the campus of Missouri Western State University.

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Photo courtesy Ron Wight

LEFT: Lee's Summit senior Peyton Hatfield during the Nov. 14 District Championship at North Kansas City High School.  
ABOVE: Tigers senior Preston Hatfield drags a Nixa defender into the end zone at the end of a touchdown run during Lee's Summit's 37-16 win in the MSHSAA Class 6 State Championship game in St. Joseph.

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Photos courtesy Ron Wight

ABOVE: Lee’s Summit head coach Todd Miller and senior Dayton Masters share a moment as the team gathers at midfield after securing their historic come-from-behind game, and season, to win the MSHSAA Class 6 State Championship.

RIGHT: Members of the Lee’s Summit High School football team, including senior Mason Gibbs (No. 24), senior Omar Madourie (No. 15), senior Mason Kinnan (No. 9), senior Dayton Masters (No. 15), senior Julius Jones (No. 0) and junior Hayden Hinkle (No. 53) acknowledge their home fans as they await the State Championship trophy presentation.



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