

# Byron Tigers State Champs Class 3A

## History at state Byron Tigers pounce on 2nd championship in 3 years

Byron breaks records for the season, state championship game

BY BRANDON LACHANCE  
NEWS MEDIA CORPORATION

**BLOOMINGTON** – Last season was crushing for the Byron football team.

After winning the IHSA Class 3A state championship in 2021, the Tigers wanted to win back-to-back, but fell to IC Catholic in a semifinal.

This year, the Tigers were set on not letting the sour taste of defeat return.

“Going into the game you could see how locked in and excited everyone was since the loss last year to IC Catholic,” Byron senior running back Ashton Henkel said. “We got up every day and were in the weight room at 5 a.m. even if we were in a different sport. It showed off in the state championship.”

“This senior group is resilient, and we just didn’t want a loss like last year to happen again. A week later, we were in the weight room, on the field, and got to work.”

The weight room, the remembrance of defeat, comradery between the upperclassmen and underclassmen, and the coaching strategy fueled Byron to a 69-7 victory over Mt. Carmel in the 2023 IHSA Class 3A State Championship on Friday, Nov. 24 at Illinois State University in Bloomington.

During the title triumph, Byron set state records.

The Tigers (14-0) scored the most points in a 3A title game (69), recorded the largest point differential in the history of all classes of Illinois state championship games (62), recorded the most points scored in a season (823), had the most rushing touchdowns in a season (109), and the largest point differential in IHSA history in a season (scored 823 and allowed 94 for a difference of 729).

“All I can say is this group of kids is unbelievable. The season that these guys just had, first and foremost, state champs, that was the goal,” said coach Jeff Boyer, who has a 115-27 record and four state championship games (two wins, two runner up finishes) in 12 years. “But then, to put an exclamation point on it here and kind of prove that they’re one of the best teams in Illinois history. It was business as usual. We tried to stay in the exact same routine that we did in 2021. We warmed up the same way. These guys certainly saved their best for last.”



**Byron Junior #1 Brayden Knoll broke free and saw the end zone in sight during the the Tiger’s Class 3A State Championship game. Knoll rushed six times for 103 yards and two touchdowns.**  
Tonja Greenfield/Ogle County Life

“We didn’t think we were going to have a game like this. Our goal was just to be 1-0. It wasn’t about records. It just happened. It was about winning a football game and getting a state championship for these kids.”

Against Mt. Carmel, Byron scored 10 rushing touchdowns while giving up one touchdown to the Golden Aces in the third quarter.

In the first quarter, sophomore Caden Considine scored on a 15-yard carry, senior Ayden Shank took a one-yard rush to paydirt, and freshman backup quarterback Andrew Talbert ran a 29-yard keeper into the endzone.

With a 21-0 first quarter lead, the Tigers added 28 more points in the second quarter with a 38-run from Talbert, a 31-yard run from junior Brayden Knoll, a 77-yard run from Talbert (his third and final touchdown of the game), and a 17-yard run from Considine (his second score).

With a 49-0 halftime lead, Knoll scored his second touchdown of the game in the third quarter with a 24-yard run and senior Carsen Behn had

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a six-yard carry into the endzone for a 63-7 lead going into the fourth.

Byron senior Carter Groharing was the only player to find the endzone in the fourth quarter with a running clock (issued in the entire second half) on a 13-yard carry for the 69-7 final.

“We were just ground and pound like we usually are. We run a lot of short plays in a row and then every once in a while, we break a big one,” Considine said. “That has been our offense for the entire year. I really focused on taking care of the ball. In a Wing-T offense, you really can’t fumble the ball. The rest is just on the go. When I have the ball, I decide if I want to run them over or



**The Byron defense held Mt. Carmel to nine first downs, 191 total rushing yards, 15 passing yards, and seven points total in their 69-7 win over Mr. Carmel on Friday, Nov. 24 at Redbird Arena on the campus of Illinois State University.**  
Tonja Greenfield/Ogle County Life

put a move on them. “It was huge to not have any turnovers, while our defense had five take-aways. It was a big goal of ours to force turnovers on them, but for us to take care of the ball. If we put the ball on the ground, it

could have been a tight game. Against Mt. Carmel we knew that, and everyone kept the ball secure.”

Considine had a game-high 17 carries for 153 yards and two touchdowns (had 100 yards in the first quarter), while Talbert

had a game-high 154 yards and three scores on five carries. Knoll also had over 100 yards as he rushed for 103 yards and two touchdowns on six carries.

See CHAMPS page 2

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## CHAMPS: Coach gives all credit to the kids

From page 1

"It's special. This team is special, and I just wanted to help out in any way I could to pull out the victory," Talbert said. "I'm grateful for the opportunity. Coach Boyer trusts me, and I trust him. He's the greatest coach I've ever had."

"These seniors are a great group, and it has been special playing with them. This team has a lot of depth with me, Considine, and a lot of others. I'm excited for next year. We just have to keep going and follow in the footsteps of this senior class."

Boyer, who has only lost seven games since 2018, had full confidence in every player on his team.

During the IHSA post-game conference and in a one-on-one interview, all credit went to the kids. His players, who he felt played the best game of their lives.



Byron senior #23 Jacob Ross breaks through Mt. Carmel defenders in the Tigers' Class 3A State Championship match. Ross had one carry for 10 yards. Tonja Greenfield/Ogle County Life

"We have a very, very strong group of seniors. Those guys are going to be hard to replace, but the younger kids have stepped up throughout the season," Boyer said. "Junior Brayden Knoll had a huge game in the semifinal with three touchdowns. Sophomore Caden Considine has been steady for us all season long and proved

he is an all-state fullback in the state championship. Freshman Andrew Talbert comes in at quarterback and runs the option. He follows stuff well and he's an explosive kid.

"I think we stayed fresh all season long with the way that we practiced. We were able to stay healthy over the season. A lot of the kids got a lot

of playing experience. A lot of the kids that played in the first half of the state championship, played a first half every week this year. That's not a knock on the teams that we played this year, that's just kind of how it was.

"It allowed us to stay fresh playing and it allowed us to peak at the right time."



Byron's #81 senior Braylon Kilduff and #25 senior Everett Wichman take down their Mt. Carmel opponent during the Tigers' Class 3A State Championship match. Kilduff recorded four tackles and Wichman recorded one tackle. Tonja Greenfield/Ogle County Life

The Byron Tigers crowd around the Class 3A State Trophy after their crushing 69-7 win over Mr. Carmel on Friday, Nov. 24 at Redbird Arena on the campus of Illinois State University. Tonja Greenfield/Ogle County Life



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# Byron Tigers State Champs Class 3A

## Game Day Snapshots



Byron sophomore #37 Caden Considine, runs through the line of Mt. Carmel defenders. Considine ran for 153 yards and two touchdowns in the Tiger's Class 3A State Championship match.  
Tonja Greenfield/Ogle County Life



Byron senior Kye Aken #29 rushed for 15 yards in the championship game.  
Tonja Greenfield/Ogle County Life



Byron Junior #1 Brayden Knoll rushed six times for 103 yards and two touchdowns in the Tigers' Class 3A State Championship game.  
Tonja Greenfield/Ogle County Life



Byron's #81 senior Braylon Kilduff and #37 sophomore Caden Considine chase after Mt. Carmel running back #23 Sitaleki Militoni. Kilduff and Considine each recorded four tackles during the state championship game.  
Tonja Greenfield/Ogle County Life



The Byron Tigers pose for a group picture with the Class 3A State Championship trophy.  
Tonja Greenfield/Ogle County Life

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## Game Day Snapshots



Byron Junior #1 Brayden Knoll broke out and carried the ball six times for 103 yards and two touchdowns.  
Tonja Greenfield/Ogle County Life



Byron's #5 Ashton Henkel tried to avoid the Mt. Carmel defenders during the state championship game. Henkel carried the ball five times for 34 yards.  
Tonja Greenfield/Ogle County Life

## The Tigers' perfect 2023 season through the weeks



- Week 1 (Aug. 25): Byron Tigers 77, Rock Falls Rockets 6
- Week 2 (Sept. 1): Byron Tigers 64, Rockford Lutheran Crusaders 0
- Week 3 (Sept. 8): Byron Tigers 70, Rockford Christian Royal Lions 14
- Week 4 (Sept. 15): Byron Tigers 69, North Boone Vikings 0
- Week 5 (Sept. 22): Byron Tigers 51, Oregon Hawks 0
- Week 6 (Sept. 29): Byron Tigers 52, Genoa-Kingston Cogs 12
- Week 7 (Oct. 6): Byron Tigers 62, Winnebago Indians 0
- Week 8 (Oct. 13): Byron Tigers 49, Dixon Dukes 6
- Week 9 (Oct. 20): Byron Tigers 43, Stillman Valley Cardinals 7
- IHSA Playoffs Round 1 (Oct. 28): Byron Tigers 72, Hansberry Bengals 0
- IHSA Playoffs Round 2 (Nov. 4): Byron Tigers 56, Peotone Blue Devils 7
- IHSA State Quarterfinals (Nov. 11): Byron Tigers 63, Du-Pec Rivermen 15
- IHSA State Semifinals (Nov. 18): Byron Tigers 26, Montini Catholic Broncos 20
- IHSA State Championship (Nov. 24): Byron Tigers 69, Mt. Carmel Golden Aces 7

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