

2024 State Journalism Championship



#10 Sports News Writing Time Limit – 1:15

Directions: Assume the role of reporter for a student newspaper. Using the information below write a sports news story. You do not have to use all the information and quotes below. Entries will be evaluated on objectivity, accuracy, and balance.

When you are finished:

1. Type or print your name on your entry.
2. Save your document as a PDF using a filename of your choice. ****Remember where you saved the file.**
3. Go to this link <https://secure.nsaahome.org/nsaaforms/jo/login/student/index.php>
4. Complete the form, hit LOGIN
5. Choose file. **MUST BE A PDF FILE**
6. Click UPLOAD
7. When done, please raise your hand for the proctor to confirm the upload was successful.

Assume you are writing this story for the Jackson Herald newspaper of Jackson High School in Jackson, Nebraska, home of the Rabbits. The story will be published in the next issue, the week following the state football championship game. You do not have to use all the information and quotes below, but the story must be completed as you would hand to an editor in the allotted time.

Jackson High School went 12-1 this year. The Rabbits won the Class B state championship. Their only loss came in the first game of the season to Washington High School, 35-17. In the playoffs, the Rabbits beat Lincoln (24-6), Adams (31-21), Jefferson (27-20) and Fillmore (17-14). Jackson has qualified for the playoffs 5 straight season and 12 time overall. The Rabbits had advanced to the semifinals twice, but this was their first time in the championship game.

Summit High School, home of the Hawks, went 10-3 this year. The Hawks finished second in Class B, losing 17-16 to Jackson in the championship game. Summit started the season 2-2 and finished the regular season 6-2 to qualify as the 12th seed in the 32-team playoff bracket. In the playoffs, the Hawks beat Browning (30-10), Greenville (21-7), Bluestem (14-13) and Redville (24-22). Summit has been in the playoffs 10 times, but this was its first appearance since 2005. The Hawks won Class B in 1985, 1991, 1999 and 2001 and finished second in 2002.

Championship Game Agate Box Score

Jackson (12-1)	7	7	0	3	-	17
Summit (10-3)	3	0	10	3	-	16

At Memorial Field, Lincoln, Nebraska

- 1st Quarter J – Dan Smith 4 run (Smith kick), 7:39.
S – Joe Welch 35 FG, 3:15.
- 2nd Quarter J – Smith 17 run (Smith kick), 8:12.
- 3rd Quarter S – Welch 41 FG, 11:25.
S – Tom Jones 23 pass from Larry Brown (Welch kick), 1:06
- 4th Quarter S – Welch 31 FG, 5:42.
J – Smith 44 FG, 0:58.
- Att. – 3,500 (est.)

	Jackson	Summit
First Downs	13	12
Rushes-Yards	48-217	28-105
Passing Yards	64	118
Return Yards	23	31
Passing	5-11-1	7-19-1
Punts-Avg.	4-34.5	5-33.8
Fumbles-Lost	3-1	4-1
Penalties-Yards	6-52	7-54
Time of Possession	27:05	20:55

Individual Leaders

Rushing – J, Dan Smith 25-178, Joe Schellen 11-56, Jim Hiller 12-(-16). S, Joe Welch 12-48, Larry Brown 11-51, Tom Jones 5-5.

Passing – J, Jeff Williams 5-11-1-64. S, Larry Brown 7-19-1-118.

Receiving – J, Dan Smith 5-64. S, Tom Jones 7-118.

Tackles (solo, assists) – J, Dan Smith (7, 5), Jordan Smith (5, 3), Hal Holbrook (4, 4). S, Joe Welch (6, 6). Samuel Waechter (4, 7), Troy Guffey (3, 5).

Highlights of scoring drives

1st Quarter – Jackson: After Summit punted on its first possession, Jackson drove 73 yards in 11 plays on its first possession. Smith scored from the 4. Smith carried 7 times for 56 yards on the drive.

1st Quarter – Summit: On its second possession, Summit drove 34 yards in 7 plays to the Jackson 18 to set up Welch's field goal.

2nd Quarter – Jackson: After a Summit lost fumble, Jackson went 59 yards in 8 plays. Smith scored from the 17.

3rd Quarter – Summit: Welch's field goal came after Jackson lost a turnover on its first possession. Summit drove to the Jackson 24.

3rd Quarter – Summit: Longest drive of the game for the Hawks: 85 yards in 13 plays. Brown threw for 43 yards on the drive.

4th Quarter – Summit: Summit drove to the Jackson 14 for Welch's field goal. Brown carried 4 times for 34 yards on the drive.

4th Quarter – Jackson: Jackson reached the Summit 27. It was 4th and 1 and Jackson had an apparent first down when Smith went 7 yards over right tackle. But a holding call negated the gain and then Jackson went for the field goal instead. This was Smith's 1st field goal in 5 games. Drive went 36 yards in 8 plays. After this score, Summit received the kickoff and threw four incomplete passes. Jackson downed the ball to end the game.

QUOTES YOU CAN USE IN STORY

Summit Coach Rod Johnson (Been head coach last 10 years) – “What an emotional roller coaster that last minute. They were driving and we thought they had gained another first down. But the penalty made it a long field goal. Kudos to the Smith kid for making that kick under that much pressure. He's also a heck of a running back. I was proud of my kids for battling back after being down 11 at halftime. This is what a championship game should be like. My kids will be proud of their accomplishments later, but right now they're hurting awful bad.”

Jackson Coach Jeff Wittry (Been head coach since 1990) – “Wow. What an amazing football game. Summit's kids played a whale of a game. I can't say enough about their heart. And what about Dan Smith? Can't imagine the pressure he was feeling before that kick. I would have liked us to have gotten closer to the goal line – heck I'd rather have scored a touchdown – but he still put it through. He's an amazing athlete that seems to shine under the brightest spotlights. He's a pretty tough runner, too. He can find his holes well and keeps those legs churning. I just told the kids in the locker room that I'm retiring after this game and I couldn't ask for a better way to end a 25-year career in coaching. The last 21 years here at Jackson have been great. This is a storybook ending to my coaching career.”

Summit Quarterback Larry Brown (6-foot-3, 210-pound junior) – “We were disappointed at halftime, being down 11, but we were still confident. We finally were able to stop them the second half and got our offense going a little better. We're crushed that we lost in the last minute, but we're also proud of how well we responded the second half.”

Jackson Running Back Dan Smith (6-foot, 205-pound senior) – “I thought that holding penalty was going to cost us the game. When coach said we were going to kick it, I got a big lump in my throat. I've only made a few kicks over 40 yards in practice. I just tried to stay focused and keep my eye on that equator on the football. When I hit it, I knew it could be good. I was just hoping it would stay inside the right upright and it did. We were all so excited to win, and then when Coach Wittry told us he was retiring, we all got teary-eyed. He's been such a great coach to have. We couldn't ask for a better way to send him out. There were a lot of hugs and tears in the locker room. We had more running room the first half and then Summit shut us down the second half. We got just enough on that last drive to give us a chance.”