

## PREP FOOTBALL

# East fumble return fuels 2nd-half surge

## Medrano runs 28 yards for a touchdown

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THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

COLORADO SPRINGS — Opportunities to make a game-changing play in a state championship don't happen too often.

East High School's Kain Medrano did not throw away his shot.

Medrano scooped up a fumble caused by East linebacker Grant Baggett and sprinted 28-yards for a touchdown to make it 14-6 in the third quarter of Saturday's 35-6 win over Discovery Canyon in the Class 3A state title game.

Afterward, the sophomore was overcome with emotion as the reflection from the gold trophy danced in his eyes.

"Everyone swarmed to the ball like we know how, and I just saw an opportunity to scoop and score," Medrano said. "We all play as a team. We all love each other and respect each other. We know that the other guy will do his job no matter what. This feels awesome."

The momentum was swung in East's favor for the rest of the game, and the defense buckled down to limit the Thunder to two first downs in the second half to help secure the third consecutive state title.

Baggett, a senior who played both ways as a linebacker and offensive tackle, was key, along with senior defensive end Josh Tellez (one sack, three tackles for loss Saturday) in shutting down a Thunder triple-option rushing attack that scored five touchdowns against East in Week 3.

"It was just a family effort," Baggett said. "If they don't score, they don't win. That's what we said. Our defense scored more than their offense, and that's a huge accomplishment against such a great ball club. It's great to go out on top, baby."

The Eagles also swiped two interceptions Saturday — the first by Medrano to end the first half and the



CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/CHRIS MCLEAN

**East High School's Kain Medrano (5) runs with the ball as teammate Luke Padula follows Saturday against Discovery Canyon.**

second by senior Luke Padula to set up East's final touchdown.

Padula also caught two passes for 47 yards and had a hand in a fourth-down stop that gave the Eagles possession deep in Thunder territory in the fourth.

"We were doubted in the beginning of the season," Padula said. "To go 13-1 and win a third state title is just awesome."

**Golden boot:** Junior kicker Sebastian Benavidez hit all five of his extra points Saturday, finishing the year 47 for 54. Until Medrano's fumble return for a touchdown, Benavidez's first kick that made it 7-6 with 9:44 left in the second quarter was the difference in the game.

**Look ahead:** With

three straight titles already in the bag, it's fair to wonder already if the Eagles can make it a four-peat next season. East will lose seven starters to graduation on offense and six on defense, but will return quarterback Luc Andrada as well as a handful of other championship-tested starters. Oh, and the Eagles will host Discovery Canyon in Week 3 of the 2017 season at Dutch Clark Stadium.

"Obviously, I can say I'm hoping for the four-peat," Andrada said. "But I'm just hoping we can come together as well as we did this year. I'm not satisfied with what I accomplished this year, I know I can get better and I learned a lot."

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