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## Best Rivalries in New Mexico

September 22, 2017- Many teams are making their way towards their non-district schedule and many teams around the state have shown that they are ready to compete at a high level. Some have surprised while others are trying to figure out what went wrong and how to fix their issues before the start of district season. With the race to be district champs getting started some of the best rivalries in the state of New Mexico will be reborn and bragging rights will be on the line, records will be on the line and playoff seeding as well. There some rivalries in the state of New Mexico that have been around for years and have had some great games with classic endings, true hard fought wins and battles for some of the best trophies other than a blue trophy. For some teams not winning a state title can hurt, but beating your rivals in a year where you can fall short of winning a state title will make up for it. There are 5 rivalries in this state that I believe are truly the greatest in the state of New Mexico and can match up with other great rivalries outside this state.

To start of the list, we look at battle for city of Las Cruces where the Mayfield Trojans and Las Cruces Bulldawgs. Since 1967 these two teams have been battling for the city of Las Cruces every year and get the chance to settle it in Aggie Memorial Stadium where the college team plays its games. For many years, these games have literally come down to one final possession whether it is a defensive stand, scoring on the final drive of the game or special teams settling the final score this rivalry has become one of the best to have been played in this state. The two have played in a couple state title games that have come down one possession and were won by Las Cruces by a combined 4 points with the 2013 matchup being won by 1 point. For many years, whomever senior class won the final matchup whether it was in the playoffs or the final regular season matchup has the true final say on who owned the rivalry and had final bragging rights for the rest of their lives. The games truly matter for every family members because there were fathers, uncles and grandfathers that have played in the games and want their young ones to carry on the tradition that makes this rivalry the best rivalry of all time.

We can't have a rivalry without title town being involved. The Artesia Bulldogs have been battling the Roswell Coyotes for 67 years and are only a few miles apart. These two battle for the small county they both belong in and have battled for district championships. So many great players have played in this series and have defined what this rivalry has become. Many great games have been played and both teams have had long winning streaks that made this rivalry special when the team that has had long losing streaks end be special. Even in those long winning streaks the matchups were mostly close and positioning for titles were claimed. Though the Coyotes have not won since 2000 Roswell has shown that they are ready to take down the Bulldogs and are tired of losing to them. This rivalry will continue to have many classics and expect more battles for state titles.

A great rivalry that belongs in the metro area is La Cueva vs Eldorado. These rivals started to play each other in 1988 and have battled for the city of Albuquerque. Also, their respective areas their schools are in. The Bears and Eagles have gone back and forth for many years trading district championships, trading spots for trips to state title games, chances to advance deeper into the playoffs and have battled for future stars with their classic battles. Many games these two have played have gone back and forth with offensive shootouts and old fashioned defensive battles that were won by field goals or only a touchdown. The past few years it has gone back and forth with one winning 3 games in a row or 2 in a row. These two will have many more battles to come with how great their programs are and the great coaches that are leading their respective teams.

One rivalry that has one of the best trophies involved belongs in the Valencia county where the Belen Eagles and the Los Lunas Tigers battle for the chili rooster since 1953. So many great battles have been fought between the two. Most have involved district titles and seeding for the playoffs. These two have traded the county for many years and will continue to do so for a very long time with the talent that has rolled through their schools. No matter the record and how many players each team has no one can count each other out and you can expect the games to be the best game of the year.

The final great rivalry to talk about that is no longer played but was great in its time was when the Capitan Tigers and the Carrizozo Grizzlies battled for Lincoln County. The two are only a few miles apart and have everything it needs to have a great rivalry. Both went after each other, no backing down from one another. Townspeople even battled for bragging rights and the players have enemies forever. Even after the game was over both were still fighting for their respective schools and were battling to be the best one of them all. The two had battled each other since 1927 all the way up to 2011 with Carrizozo dropping to eight-man football. The two battled for many titles throughout the time of the rivalry and battled to see who starts weight lifting in November or to see who will play for the blue trophy. A lot of excellent players have played in this game and had helped make the rivalry one of the best for two small schools down in Lincoln county. Someday this rivalry will be replayed and the grandfathers and fathers who played in this game will get to see their younglings continue a great tradition that once was.

Usually at this point in the year there are some teams that have been a major surprise or have not been noticed much. Time to give some love to these teams that have not gotten their due to this point in the year. For class 6A the Hobbs Eagles have been the major surprise of the year beating two state rivals that are highly ranked in class 5A and have the best offense in class 6A. these Eagles love to spread the whole field out and trust their start quarterback Gavin Hardison to get the ball to the receivers and score 35 a game. The defense has been coming of age lately and are heavy favorites to dethrone the Las Cruces Bulldawgs in district 6A-3. If the Eagles can keep scoring at a high pace and can hold the other team's offenses to lower scores expect Hobbs to be in the hunt for the championship late in the year.

In class 5A while they have the same name as the New England, the Patriots of Miyamura came into the season as a very underrated team and have played some solid football to start the season. They have shown balance on offense and have a defense that can hold its end of the bargain for the offense. The Patriots are led by senior quarterback Matt Chavez who has total command of the offense and can lead his team. The Patriots will be in the running for their district championship and have a chance to clinch a playoff spot at home to start the playoff run. They will be tested still having to face St. Pius, Farmington and Aztec to finish off the regular season. If they are all three or two of these teams the Patriots will have a high seed in the playoffs and will be dangerous team to win the class 5A title.

The Pintos of Moriarty are a team that's need some love with the way they have played and for beating some good football teams this year. The Pintos like to play old school football by running the triple option offense and playing tough defense that will make the 85 Bears proud. The Pinots are the only team that I have seen so far this season that can matchup with Robertson and have a great chance to meet them in the championship come December. This is a great football team that is dangerous and is motivated to win the title this year.

Here are the top 5 games of the week

1. Artesia Bulldogs vs Cleveland Strom- rare matchup between some of the best teams in the state. The Bulldogs come in seeking revenge after Cleveland beat them in their own house 42-28 last year. Taylor Null leads the Dogs in a high scoring game 49-42.
2. Rio Rancho Rams vs Manzano Monarchs- Monarchs need to show they can stick with the big boys. They will show that they can but lose to the Rams in a defensive battle 17-14.
3. Roswell Coyotes vs Belen Eagles- Eagles believe they deserve a chance to be number one with the way they have played and deserve more respect. Eagles earn more respect by winning this one 38-31.
4. Centennial Hawks vs Hobbs Eagles- winner of the game is in the running for a chance to battle Las Cruces for the district title. Loser falls behind and may have to settle for third place. Eagles win scoring at the last second 45-38.
5. St. Pius Sartans vs Lovington Wildcats- Sartans head to the blue turf to battle the Wildcats with playoff seeding implications on the line. Wildcats have shown new life and will be a great team in the playoffs. Just not this one as the Sartans have improved from a week 2 loss to West Mesa and win this one 35-30.