

# Crusaders win SSA 4A Football Provincial Championship



This past Saturday, November 29, 2025 the #10 Austin O'Brien Crusaders defeated the #1 Holy Trinity Academy Knights by a score of 15-14 to secure the program's fifth 4A Provincial Championship and become the first 10<sup>th</sup> ranked team to make and win a Provincial Final.

Coming out of the teacher's strike and into Provincials, AOB had a losing record of 2-4. At first glance viewers may wonder why AOB was in Provincials to begin with, but playing a division higher in Metro Division I in Edmonton allowed them to secure a berth into their school size's Provincial bracket. Prior to the labour disruption, the Crusaders were dealing with a list of injuries to key players, so the 3-week pause to the season allowed those players to get healthy and come back with something to prove.

## **4A Quarterfinals: #10 Austin O'Brien Crusaders (43) vs #4 St. Joseph's Celtics (16):**

Going into the Quarterfinals, AOB had a matchup with the #4 St. Joseph's Celtics. The two teams met in the 2024 4A Quarterfinal, with the Celtics coming back from a 19-point deficit in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter to defeat the Crusaders in an instant classic. This time around, AOB was looking to make a statement to the rest of the 4A field. The Crusaders would get off to a hot start with a stop from their defence and an opening drive touchdown from their offence. After extending the lead to 25-0, the Celtics would claw their way back into the game with two quick scores of their own to make it 25-14. The Crusader offence would respond immediately with a touchdown of their own, and the defence, led by the linebacker trio of #0 Michael Thomas, #9 Zade Eliason, and #11 Noah Banack, would pitch a shutout in the second half as the Crusaders would cruise to a 43-16 victory.



#### **4A North Final: #10 Austin O'Brien Crusaders (45) vs #5 Hunting Hills Lightning (0):**

The North Final saw the Crusaders once again come in as underdogs, this time against the #5 Hunting Hills Lightning. This was a rematch of the 2023 North Final, where AOB came away with the victory on route to their 2023 4A Championship. AOB would once again get out to a blazing start, with the defence shutting down the Lightning run game to force a punt on the opening drive. AOB would take advantage on the very next play on Special Teams, with #25 Declan Reid tackling the Hunting Hills punter inside the 10-yard line to set the Crusaders up with excellent field position. The offence would waste no time, taking just two plays to open the scoring with a touchdown pass from #4 Malcolm Matheson to #6 Vincent Horne. Matheson would go on to have his best performance of the season, throwing five touchdown passes to four different receivers. The Crusader defence would go on to pitch a shutout as the Crusaders would go on to win 45-0, booking their spot in the 4A final for the third time in the last four years.



#### **4A Provincial Final: #10 Austin O'Brien Crusaders (15) vs #1 Holy Trinity Academy Knights (14):**

Coming into the 2025 4A Provincial Final, the storylines seemed to be endless: AOB being the first-ever 10-seeded team to make it to the final; HTA, the defending 4A champions and #1 ranked team, looking to win back-to-back titles; and AOB looking to win their second championship in three years against a team that has had their number in their last two meetings. Braving the cold on a late-November afternoon, both teams came into the game with a chance to write the final chapter of their respective storybook seasons. Similar to the previous two weeks, the AOB defence started hot, forcing a punt on the Knights' opening drive. AOB's offence looked to be starting hot as well, but an opening play fumble on a wide-open catch and run would give the ball right back to the defending champions. HTA would take advantage of the turnover and punch it into the endzone to take an early 7-0 lead. AOB would get right back to it on offence with #3 Alex Jacobson kickstarting their second drive with a 15-yard run to get AOB into HTA territory. The Matheson-Horne connection would prove to be deadly, with the duo connecting for two completions on the drive to set AOB up on the 1-yard line. The Crusaders would plunge forward, punching it in, with #30 Remi Doderai adding on the extra point to tie the game at 7. The two teams would trade field position for the rest of the first half, with the only points being scored on a conceded safety by HTA. Late in the first half, #2 Jeremiah Modjani would make a shoestring tackle, saving a touchdown. AOB's defence would hold off the Knights' offence, making a goal line stand on a huge sack from #52 Brady Deckert. The Crusaders would go into halftime up 9-7.



Coming out of the half, the Crusaders received the kickoff and wasted no time getting their explosive passing attack going with consecutive big plays to #24 Brady Weeks and #6 Vincent Horne. The Crusaders wouldn't be able to take advantage of the big plays and would come out of the drive empty-handed after a missed field goal. The second half would prove to be a battle of the defences, with the AOB defence continuously shutting down



the HTA rushing attack. Midway through the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, the Knights would break through the stingy Crusader defence, scoring a touchdown to take their first lead of the game. AOB's offence wouldn't be able to get back on track, and with a late interception by HTA, all hope seemed to be lost for the underdog Crusaders. With 2:24 left in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, AOB's offence would take the field one more time, with one last chance to save their season. After two incompletions, the Crusaders were left with a 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10 from their own 20-yard line. Not converting would almost guarantee a Knights victory to repeat as champions. Then, in the biggest moment of their season, the AOB passing attack would catch fire for one last huge play. #4 Malcolm Matheson would connect with #2 Jeremiah Modjani deep over the middle for a 90-yard catch and run touchdown to give the lead back to the Crusaders with two minutes to play. Both teams would trade punts, with HTA getting one last chance with 49 seconds left to break the hearts of AOB once again. After a penalty extended the HTA drive, they were faced with a third down of their own to try and save their season, but the LB core of AOB proved once again why they are some of the best in Alberta, with #9 Zade Eliason sealing the game with a sack, allowing the Crusaders offence to kneel the game out.



This season for the Crusaders was characterized by overcoming adversity. A slow start, a pile of injuries, and the teacher's strike would have made it easy for this team to fold, but this team came back with something to prove not only to the entire province, but to themselves. The Final versus HTA was a microcosm of our season - filled with ups and downs and huge momentum swings. But when it mattered most, the belief this group had built on the backs of thousands of practice reps and hours spent in film sessions came through on THE play of the season, and the biggest play in AOB Football history. The 32 players that suited up that night became forever connected - not just as 4A Provincial Champions, but as the first 10-seed every to reach and WIN a Provincial Championship.



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