

## **Heartbreaking End Matadors fall to Garden City on late TD**

YUMA, Ariz. – One big play turned the tables on Saturday afternoon in the NJCAA National Championship game at the 2016 El Toro Bowl. #1 Garden City Community College went 84 yards in 56 seconds and scored a game winning touchdown with 30 seconds left to take the National Championship 25-22 over Arizona Western College. This is the first time Garden City has won a National Championship in school history.

The Broncbusters (11-0 overall) used a pair of big plays to scoot down the field against the Matador defense. With the clock ticking on second down, quarterback Peyton Huslig found a wide-open Ben Phillips down the sideline. He raced 51 yards to the Matador 14-yard line with 56 seconds to play. After a pair of pass interference penalties put the ball at the one, Huslig lofted a ball to Harley Hazlett, and Hazlett hauled it in for the winning score. Huslig was named the Offensive MVP for Garden City after the game after finishing 13-22 for 159 yards and two touchdown passes while adding 116 rushing yards and a touchdown.

The Matadors (11-1 overall) seemed to lock things up late in the fourth with a clock-draining five-minute drive that took the clock down to 1:26. With a 22-19 lead, the offense had first and goal at the three. Garden City's top-ranked defense stonewalled Arizona Western on four straight plays to give its offense one last chance.

Early in the game, it seemed like Garden City would run away with the game. After the Matadors missed a field goal off the upright, Huslig called his own number on a zone read. He scampered 85 yards down the sideline to give his team a 7-0 lead after the extra point with 4:16 to go in the first quarter.

At the start of the second quarter, Garden City pinned AWC deep in its own territory. The Mats went three-and-out, and the Broncbusters forced a fumble as the Mats tried to fake a punt. Malcolm Howard recovered in the end zone to put GCCC up 13-0. AWC blocked the extra point.

Arizona Western finally found a groove on offense halfway through the second quarter. After a roughing the punter penalty extended a drive, the Mats worked down to the 16-yard line. Gant threw a pass to Dominick Anderson who hurdled a defender to get into the end zone and cut the lead to 13-7.

On the next play from scrimmage, the Matador defense forced Huslig to fumble, and Jekyren Miles scooped it up and scored from 25 yards out. Nino Alibegic hit the extra point to put the Mats up 14-13 with 2:36 to go in the half.

Garden City re-took the lead with one more big play right before halftime. Huslig threw a wide receiver screen to Mike Hughes. Hughes needed one block down the sideline before diving to the pylon to complete the 32-yard catch-and-run. A two-point conversion failed, and Garden City led 19-14 at the half.

In the fourth quarter, the Matadors retook the lead. Four straight run plays moved the ball from the AWC 24 to the Garden City eight. Two plays later, Jeremy Patton caught a pass at the two-yard line and rumbled through an arm tackle into the end zone. Gant found David Lucero in the back of the end zone for a two-point conversion that put the Mats up 22-19. Gant finished 16-31 with 214 yards, two touchdowns and two interceptions.

Defensive lineman Jeremy Faulk was named the Defensive MVP for Garden City. Patton was named the Offensive MVP for Arizona Western College, and linebacker Patrick Macon was the Defensive MVP for AWC.

This is the second time that the Matadors have played in the National Championship under head coach Tom Minnick.

Arizona Western College is one of the top community colleges in Arizona. The college boasts partnerships with all three state universities that include face-to-face classes in Yuma. AWC leads the state in enrollment growth over the past 10 years and handed out more than 2,400 certificates and degrees in 2015-16.