



LEFT: The excited Braves celebrate the win.
ABOVE: Coach **Bob Clark** gets a hug from athletic director **Tracy Leinen**

A dramatic end

Gustavsen's big plays late in the game lets Braves rally to beat Meridian and celebrate in style

By **Bruce Smith**
Matchup

The Boise Braves' offense peaked at the best time.

Trailing by 23 points with about eight minutes remaining, senior quarterback Tanner Gustavsen led the Braves to probably the biggest comeback in school history. Gustavsen scored on an 8-yard run with 1.9 seconds left and then waltzed in on the ensuing two-point conversion as Boise ended with an improbable 62-61 victory.

"Every possession was pressure-packed," said Boise coach Bob Clark. "It was an exciting game and the resiliency of our guys went above and beyond.

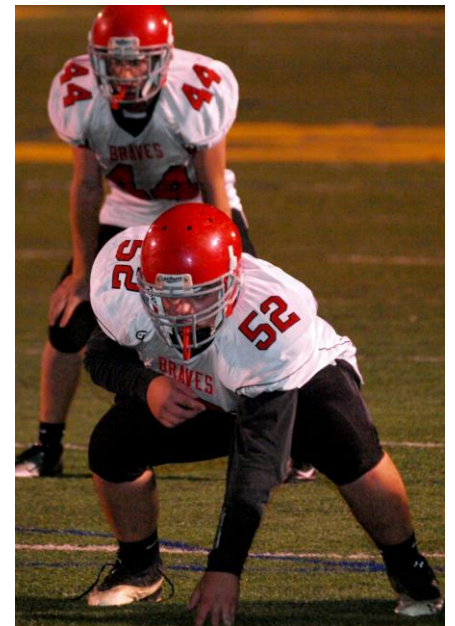
"To win, and in such dramatic fashion, it felt like we won the state championship. It was a good way to wrap up a

really fun year."

There was no local media coverage of this game between two teams that had been eliminated from postseason play, but it was easily the most exciting of any SIC contest this year.

Boise never led until the final seconds. Gustavsen passed for a career-high 415 yards and ran for 85 more. He had four rushing touchdowns and three through the air. However, it wasn't until the game was over that he realized what had been accomplished.

"It was pretty crazy," Gustavsen said. "I just kept telling everyone that we were going to take the ball down the field. I wasn't really focused on the score. Everything was working for us and we kept going downfield on them."



Nick Funke (front) and **Brett Walton** get ready for the next play.

Boise actually tied the game 54-54, but Bryson Stout's 40-yard run allowed Meridian to pull ahead again. The Braves were disappointed, but the quick score also set up the final theatrics.

The play of the game occurred with the clock winding down at Meridian's 8-yard line.

"It was either score or

Continued on next page



Continued from previous page

game over,” Gustavsen said. “To not score would be just devastating.”

Gustavsen rolled to the right and had teammates Brett Walton and Jacob Kodanko. He said he leaped toward the front corner of the end zone from just inside the 3-yard line and hoped for the best.

“I went for it,” he recalled. “I told the offensive line before the game to regret nothing. Going airborne was one thing I always wanted to do in high school.”

Gustavsen was hit at least two Meridian defenders and twirled around in the air before crossing the pylon. Later, Braves’ players admitted there was no doubt what they would do next, even though kicker Travis Browndyke had been perfect on the night.

“We were definitely going,” Gustavsen said. “Earlier in the season (vs. Capital), we were down and ended up kicking the extra point and it was blocked. There was no doubt this time.”

Walton gave a brief pep talk in the huddle. Zach Noeker said he remembered it well.

“He said, ‘if I don’t get the ball, I’m leading the way in,’” Noeker said. “We then had some wide receivers make some key blocks and it was nice to see.”

“It was a pass play,” Gustavsen said. “But I just saw an opening and ran.”

He followed Walton and Josh Scholer and reached the end zone untouched, setting up a frenzied celebration on the field. After the Braves stopped Meridian on the kickoff, a bunch of Boise fans rushed the field and didn’t leave for several minutes as cameras recorded the historic occasion.

For the game, Boise amassed 629 yards, while Meridian had 539. Both defenses were decimated. The Braves gave up 46 points in the first half, but stopped the Warriors three straight times in the final quarter.

“They came through when they had to,” Clark said.

ABOVE: Cameron Mayne (No. 3), Tyler Cox (No. 10) and a few Boise fans get a good look at the game’s biggest play as **Tanner Gustavsen** goes over the goal line.

GAME SUMMARY

Boise	14	17	0	31	-	62
Meridian	24	22	8	7	-	61

- M** – Bryson Stout 11 run (Jake Berard run)
- M** – Tucker Bronken 75 pass from Berard (Stout run)
- B** – Tanner Gustavsen 4 run (Travis Browndyke kick)
- B** – Josh Maxfield 4 run (Browndyke kick)
- M** – Stout 48 pass from Berard (Bronken run)
- B** – Cameron Mayne 7 pass from Gustavsen (Browndyke kick)
- M** – Stout 92 kickoff return (Stout run)
- B** – Gustavsen 5 run (Browndyke kick)
- M** – Berard 39 run (Berard run)
- M** – Colton Crow 34 pass from Berard (pass failed)
- B** – FG Browndyke 26
- M** – Darrian Lobato 7 run (Lobato run)
- B** – Gustavsen 29 run (Brett Walton run)
- B** – Mayne 64 pass from Gustavsen (Walton run)
- B** – Mayne 4 pass from Gustavsen (Browndyke kick)
- M** – Stout 40 run (Haus kick)
- B** – Gustavsen 8 run (Gustavsen run)

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Boise – Gustavsen 14-85, Josh Maxfield 10-48, Chase Choate 9-44, Walton 8-37. Meridian – Berard 16-122, Lobato 17-112, Stout 9-99, Quinn Mendiola 3-26, Bronken 2-12.

PASSING: Boise – Gustavsen 29-39-0-415 yards. Meridian – Berard 4-6-0-168 yards.

RECEIVING: Boise – Skyler Rowe 16-240, Mayne 7-105, Deion Hardy 2-20, Tyler Cox 1-23, Maxfield 1-11, Kodanko 1-11, Calen Gustavsen 1-5. Meridian – Bronken 2-86, Stout 1-48, Crow 1-34.