

Tanner Gustavsen:

Boise's three-year starting quarterback ended his career in magnificent style

By Bruce Smith
Matchup

To list all that Tanner Gustavsen accomplished in high school would take too much space in this Boise High School football yearbook.

In order to make it fit, it's best to note what he meant to the Braves' football team.

"I can't even explain how important he was to us," said coach Bob Clark.

"He had a better season this year because he had a better line," said tight end Deion Hardy. "We were making some blocks and he made things happen. He has always had the ability, he just didn't always have the resources."

Gustavsen won the SIC's offensive player of the year (rare for a 3-6 team) and should have won another award for "best highlight reel." Coach Clark said he never gave up and, despite that, also avoided injuries.

"He deserves the conference player of the year," said running back/linebacker Brett Walton. "That play he made against Meridian was just awesome."

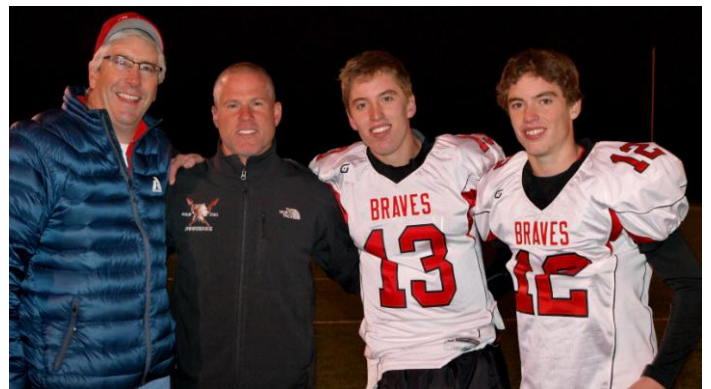
Gustavsen was Boise's 6-foot, 185-pound senior quarterback. He was a three-year starter. His amazing football career began when he was voted a team captain as a sophomore. He threw for over 6,500 yards, including 2,340 yards a senior, when Boise had its best season in years.

"It went really well," Gustavsen said. "Last year, we had our struggles but we were able to work throughout the summer with the players we had and capitalize on that. You really saw it in the way we moved the ball.

"I worked on minimizing turnovers," he added. "It might be my experience. I watched a lot of film."



Tanner Gustavsen was the driving force of Boise's offense and led perhaps one of the greatest rallies in school history.



Gustavsen poses for a photo after the Meridian game with his father, **Andy**, coach **Bob Clark**, and his brother, **Calen**.

Gustavsen threw just four interceptions, and two came at desperate times late in games. Gustavsen said his best memory was Boise's season

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TOP LEFT: Tanner Gustavsen runs ahead of a couple of Vallivue tacklers.

MIDDLE LEFT: Gustavsen gets some medical attention.

MIDDLE: Gustavsen gets a nice block from Larry Evans.

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Gustavsen's highlights

- * - **THREE-YEAR STARTER** at QB.
- * - **SIC's TOP OFFENSIVE PLAYER** his senior year. 2nd team all-state pick.
- * - **TWICE NAMED** the *Idaho Statesman's* player of the week. Also was interviewed for being a "Distinguished Student" on KTVB-TV.
- * - **YOUNGER BROTHER**, Calen, was a freshmen and also plays QB.
- * - **LIKED DONA LARSEN PARK**, saying it felt "more crowded."
- * - **FELT "NO HUDDLE"** offense got defenses tired.
- * - **CALLED ROCKY MOUNTAIN** the best defensive team they played.

opener against Borah at Dona Larsen Park, when he passed for 212 yards and three touchdowns in the 38-24 win.

"A lot of our students had their doubts about us, but that game was pretty crazy," he said. "When the clock ran down, and I saw everyone run on to the field, that was great. To have our first game (of the season) be a victory, especially with all the hype in the media, was pretty cool."

Of course, most of his teammates recall the final game. When Boise trailed Meridian by 23 points with eight minutes left and rallied for a 62-61 victory. Gustavsen said he wasn't paying attention to the score. He just knew Boise had to score as quickly as possible.

Boise won on a play-call gamble, when Gustavsen ran eight yards for a touchdown, leaping over three Meridian players to somehow get into the end zone. He then scored the game-winning two-point conversion.

"That was probably the greatest game I've ever played. I was happy to go out on a good note," he said.

"We just focused on going out and doing our jobs. Everything was working for us and we kept going down field on them. It was a great feeling.

"That last play was do-or-die. I had that in mind. To not score would have been devastating. I turned the corner and had a couple of (Boise) guys in front of me and went for it. Going airborne was one thing I always wanted to do in high school."

With the accomplishments, Gustavsen praised his teammates, several whom he played football with since his family moved to Boise when he was 10 years old.

He raved about Walton's block that allowed him to reach the end zone at Meridian. He said his receivers – Hardy, Cameron Mayne, Skyler Rowe and Avery Miller – made great catches and the offensive line allowed him and Boise's backfield to pose a running threat.

"We had all the tools for a great offense," he said. "We'd just take the ball down the field and dare anyone to stop us."

Opposing coaches called Gustavsen the driving force, and awarded him the league's top offensive player award. Gustavsen hoped it would help him earn a college football scholarship.

"It was really cool. It's a good feeling to have that kind of recognition," he said. "I would like to play college ball somewhere. Just see what school gives me a shot. It's quite the frustrating process."