

# Deion Hardy:

The team's best athlete, he was proud to be part of its exciting turnaround

By Bruce Smith  
Matchup

Deion Hardy was a three-sport athlete at Boise High School.

At 6-foot-5, 210 pounds, few could match what he could do in competition. He played football, basketball and track and field, but there was no disputing his favorite.

"Definitely football," he said. "I'm a football guy all around."

Hardy played both ways. On offense, he was the team's second-leading receiver, although he probably ranked first in acrobatics. On defense, he was on the end or in the backfield. Not many quarterbacks wanted to throw his way.

Hardy grew up in Nampa, but moved his freshman year, where he had to decide between attending Mountain View or Boise. Of the four kids in his family, he was the only one to choose to be a Brave. Mountain View tended to have more success, but Hardy was unconcerned. He saw how much he and his teammates accomplished.

"This season went fairly well compared to the way last year went," he said. "The games were a lot closer. It was a big turnaround.

"My season was 100 times better than my junior year. Last year, I was dropping balls and I was injured and out for several games. This year, I had more touchdowns and got to play some defense. It was a blast."

Hardy said the team's best game was the season finale against Meridian, but he broke his collarbone with about six minutes remaining and had to watch the most exciting part from the bench.

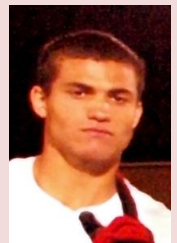
His favorite game was Boise's contest against Capital at Dona Larsen Park. The Braves, who hadn't won a homecoming contest in years, trailed 35-0 at



Deion Hardy grips the ball tightly after catching a pass and roaring into the end zone against Centennial.

### Hardy's highlights

- \* - **CAUGHT 40 PASSES** for 520 yards and four touchdowns as a senior.
- \* - **SCORED FIRST TOUCHDOWN** in new Dona Larsen Park stadium.
- \* - **FAVORITE PLAY** was late-game touchdown catch against Capital.
- \* - **HE CALLED** Erik Miller the most improved player on the team this year.
- \* - **SECOND OF FOUR KIDS** in his family, but the only one to attend Boise High.



Deion Hardy

one point and yet almost won. In the final minutes, Hardy caught a 22-yard touchdown pass from Tanner Gustavsen, making the score 42-41.

"It was fourth quarter, two minutes left and 4<sup>th</sup>-down-and-something," Hardy recalled. "Tanner

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rolled out and threw it. It was a big turnaround for me. Catching that ball in the clutch on a play that was so critical.”

Hardy remembered the intensity. In fact, that was one of the most noticeable differences during this football season.

He said it started before the season opener Aug. 24, which also marked the opening of the stadium at Dona Larsen Park, which was only a mile from Boise High. The Braves were considered underdogs, but Hardy caught a 13-yard pass from Gustavsen (the first touchdown scored on the new field) and the Braves won 38-24.

“Everyone just got ready to play that game and we felt that it was our field,” Hardy recalled. “We were fired up and it felt more like a rivalry. That win was for the field.”

The Braves played their first two games at the new stadium and the victories over Borah and Vallivue gave them momentum. They also started a new tradition of walking to the stadium.

“I liked walking better than taking the bus. You got to clear your head and get into your own zone,” he said. “It was a tradition that should keep on going. People (in cars) were honking their horns. I didn’t recognize anybody. I was just trying to get into my zone.”

Hardy made second team all-SIC as a tight end and, as soon as football ended, set his eyes on basketball. The collarbone injury forced him to miss tryouts, but he hoped to be on the court shortly afterward.

Hardy said those last few minutes on the sidelines during the Meridian game gave him a chance to reflect.

He said Rocky Mountain was Boise’s most difficult opponent, and the Meridian game the most memorable. Watching Gustavsen glide through the air to score the touchdown in the final seconds was exciting, and he had to be careful as the Braves and their fans swarmed the stadium after the win.

“It did feel like we won the championship,” he said. “Maybe it wasn’t as great, but it was still pretty awesome.”



**TOP LEFT:** Deion Hardy lines up into position against Centennial.

**TOP RIGHT:** Hardy and Skyler Rowe listen to instructions in a 2011 game.

**MIDDLE RIGHT:** Hardy scores the first touchdown at Dona Larsen Park.

**LOWER RIGHT:** Hardy gets instructions.