

Above and beyond

Season-opening win rejuvenates Braves and sends them to a remarkable season that ends with dramatic comeback

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- Coach Bob Clark

By Bruce Smith
Matchup

The 2012 football season couldn't have ended a better way.

The Boise Braves were at Meridian, a team they hadn't defeated in almost 20 years. But Tanner Gustavsen, a four-year senior, scored on an 8-yard run with 1.9 seconds left. Shortly afterward, Gustavsen won the game with the successful two-point conversion.

"We were down 23 points with eight minutes to go, but we never quit," said coach Bob Clark. "On defense, we got aggravated. On offense, every possession was pressure packed. The resiliency of our guys went above and beyond."

The Braves finished with a 3-6 record and did not make the postseason. However, it was a season full of great memories.

It started when Boise shocked the entire city with a 38-24 victory over cross-town rival Borah in the season opener, which inaugurated the new stadium – Dona Larsen Park.

The next week, Boise defeated Vallivue on its home field and was 2-0. The Braves had to deal with injuries and a lack of depth and didn't win another game until beating Meridian. However, after a tough 2011 season, Boise



Josh Maxfield is congratulated by the fans after Boise's victory over Vallivue.

football became the talk of the town for a while.

"It felt really good," said Clark. "Last year, we played a lot of young kids and that experience helped us out a lot. We were pleased at how they played and performed. The kids battled every game, more so

than they ever have."

The excitement leading up to the opening of the new stadium put a lot of pressure on the players, but Boise quickly built a 24-3 lead on Borah, a team it also hadn't beaten for a

Continued on next page

BOISE FOOTBALL: 2012 season recap



Continued from previous page



2012 results (3-6)

Date	Opponent	W/L	Score
Aug. 24	BORAH*	W	38-24
Aug. 30	VALLIVUE*	W	28-14
Sept. 7	at Eagle*	L	9-38
Sept. 14	Open		
Sept. 21	at Rocky Mountain*	L	17-47
Sept. 28	at Mountain View*	L	28-48
Oct. 4	CENTENNIAL*	L	42-54
Oct. 12	CAPITAL*	L	41-42
Oct. 18	at Timberline*	L	14-28
Oct. 26	at Meridian*	W	62-61

* - 5A SIC games. Home games in CAPS

LEFT: Tanner Gustavsen dives for the goal line in Boise's win over Meridian.

MIDDLE: Skyler Rowe had a remarkable season as Boise's top receiver.

while, and the Braves were never threatened.

"We had a good feeling going into the game," said Clark. "There were a lot of high stakes, opening the new stadium and playing our oldest rival. The family that donated the money for the stadium was also a Boise High family. There was a whole newness of it and the kids really responded to the pressure big time and we came out firing."

The ironic part was the day started badly. The Braves were scheduled to take the bus to the field, even though it was only a little more than a mile away. The bus, however, failed to show and a new tradition was created.

"We talked about walking to BSU for years," Clark said. "The kids are full of energy and, I thought to myself, 'it's a beautiful walk down Washington Street.' As coaches, we decided to do it. We just started walking and it turned into a neat tradition. People (in cars) were honking their horns at us.

"It was kind of cool. It's a real quiet street, but it was such a good experience, we made it a tradition."

The win over Borah had the attention of the town – and the league – and it proved to be really interesting since Borah was the surprise team of the league and ended up earning the district's No. 1 seed in the 5A playoffs.

Boise then ended another long drought with the win over Vallivue – taking advantage of interception returns for touchdowns by Cameron Mayne and Noah Willison. Injuries then took their

toll and much of the rest of the season was finding ways to deal with it.

Most of the injuries involved defensive players. Meanwhile, the offense was setting records.

Led by Gustavsen, who passed for 2,340 yards and ran for 676 more, many of Boise's games were track meets. The Braves also had an impressive running attack with Chase Choate, Brett Walton, Josh Maxfield and, of course, Gustavsen.

"Our biggest problem was that many times we scored too quickly and we didn't give our defense enough rest," Clark said. "We dominated a lot of teams."

Gustavsen was named the SIC's offensive player of the year. He was helped by remarkable seasons by Skyler Rowe, Deion Hardy, Avery Miller and Mayne.

"Tanner had a phenomenal season," Clark said. "I can't even explain how important he was to us."

The Braves have had to battle through difficult times in recent years. This year's three-win team could have been better but injuries to guys like Juda Drennan, J.D. Durham and Miller had everyone wondering what might have been.

"We had good crowds because we were so much fun to watch," Clark said. "We had a great QB and receivers and we could score at any point. We led the league in yards. The kids (students) liked to watch that because it was fun. And we were playing pretty good."