

# Justin Coburn:

His 'unbelievable' season made him an easy choice as most improved player

By Bruce Smith  
Matchup

Justin Coburn came a long way.

From the opening day to the 5A playoffs, nobody accomplished more than Borah's 6-foot-3, 205-pound tight end. Naming him the team's most improved player at the team banquet was a foregone conclusion.

"Without a doubt, the most improved player I've ever seen in 29 years of coaching," said coach Darren Corpus. "It was unbelievable what that kid did."

Even Coburn agreed. After the first game, he wondered if he would keep his starting spot. But he finished with 51 catches for 830 yards and eight touchdowns. He finished the season with 11 receptions for 212 yards and two scores against Highland, including an incredible 81-yarder that people were talking about a long time afterward.

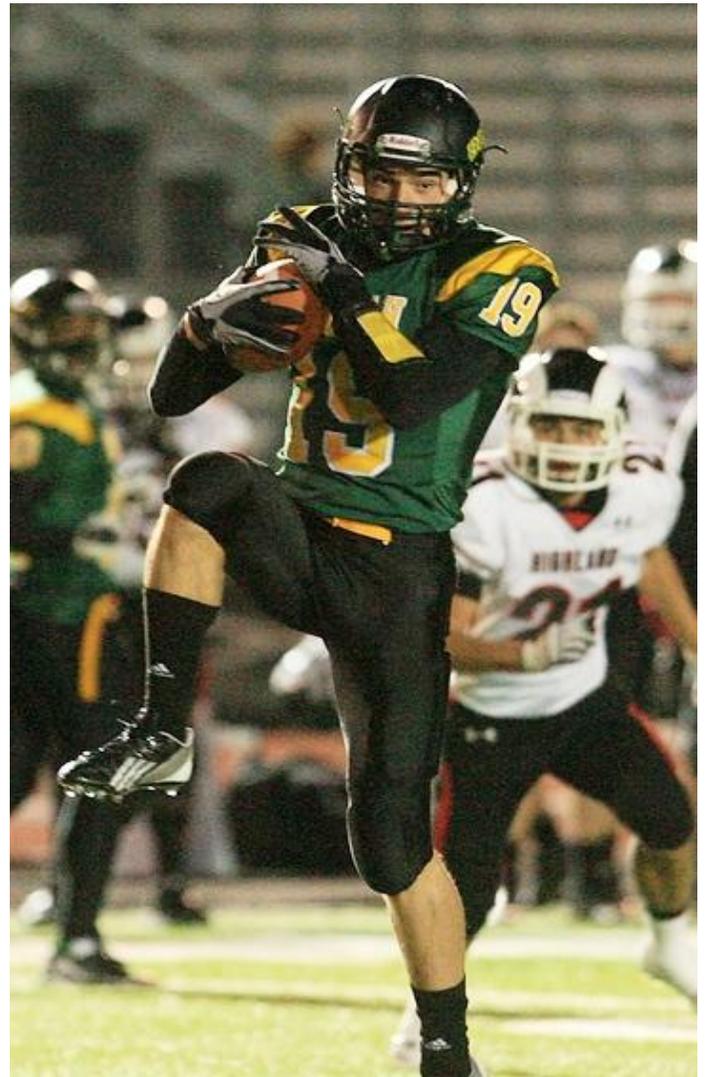
"If you look from the Boise game to Highland, I think, 'yeah,'" Coburn said. "I started focusing more when I was in there. I got the offense down correctly and they started to pass to me more."

The 5A playoff game (vs. Highland) was the crowning touch. Borah had the lead for much of the contest and, until the final minutes, his long touchdown catch was the game's highlight.

The ironic part was that Coburn hurt his shoulder against Rocky Mountain and wondered if he might be replaced by Trey Dennis. By game time, however, he was OK.

"I did really well," he said. "I lined up on the left and had a post route. I caught it in stride across the middle and nobody could catch me."

Coburn's speed (he ran the 100 meters in 10.8 seconds the previous track season) certainly helped. He gave the Lions a secondary deep threat.



Justin Coburn had 51 catches during the season and made a dramatic improvement for the Lions that was well noticed.

## Coburn's highlights

- \* - **FIRST TEAM ALL-SIC** and second team all-state. He tied for most catches by a Borah receiver.
- \* - **FELT THE MERIDIAN WIN** was the turning point of the season.
- \* - **PRIOR TO THIS SEASON**, his best highlight was when he caught a 99-yard touchdown pass as a sophomore.
- \* - **CALLED BOISE AND TIMBERLINE** the most-surprising teams in the SIC this season.



Corpus said he contemplated moving Coburn to defensive end, but after he made several tough grabs in two-minute drills in practice, he kept him solely on the offense.

"We needed him to focus on offense," Corpus said, "and he was pretty impressive."

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## BORAH FOOTBALL: Senior profile



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Coburn had a lot of good memories from the 2012 season. He said the season opener against Boise was a disaster for him – and the team. He had four catches for just 29 yards vs. Boise, and the next contest at Centennial was even worse until he caught a 58-yard touchdown pass that ended up being the game-winner.

“I had been having a really bad game and that was very important,” he said. “It was our last possession and play action. The linebackers bit and it was huge.”

After that, the highlights kept coming. However, the Capital game was first in Coburn’s mind. Coburn said he had a great view of several events that decided that game.

“I had a couple of important catches on that last drive,” he said. “(On the two-point conversion) I was right behind the play. I thought it was a catch. I was putting my hands up in the air to signal a touchdown. The back judge said it hit the ground, but I saw it never hit the ground. The Capital kid picked it up out of Montana’s (Bilger) hands.

“I tried to keep my head, but I was pretty angry and yelling a little bit,” he added. “I was off to the side a little bit, but there were a lot of kids in his (the official’s) way. He didn’t have a clear view of the ball.”

Coburn said he felt Borah had a chance to win the state title, but injuries hurt their chances. He said he was particularly impressed with junior running back Karsten Niederer, who broke his jaw against Rocky but did not want to leave the stadium. TOP RIGHT:

He also was happy to have such a great influence on the Lions’ season, especially after so many difficult years previously.

“There are eight kids in my family, including me,” he said. “I’m the seventh and all the boys have been football players. It makes me feel pretty great.

At press time, Coburn hoped to earn a football scholarship and had been contacted by a couple of Montana schools but nothing had been decided.

**TOP LEFT:** Justin Coburn and several other players listen to their coach’s suggestions.

**TOP RIGHT:** Coburn poses with his parents on “Senior Night.”

**BELOW:** Coburn snags a pass vs. Timberline.

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**Coach  
Darren Corpus**

