

Making history



Hot start gives Bengals momentum, but it was the way they finished that will be remembered

By Bruce Smith
Matchup

In Brighton High School football lore, it will just be remembered as “the play.” There may be others in Brighton history, but now there’s certainly another.

Fourth down and 12 yards to go. The clock was winding down with just over a minute remaining. The Bengals were playing West Jordan in a play-in game on a comfortable Monday afternoon at Hillcrest High’s field and trailed 7-6. The winner would go to the playoffs, the loser went home.

The Bengals had a good season going. They would eventually finish with an 8-5 record. They started the season winning their first five games, including an impressive 21-14 comeback victory over Davis in the opener.

“We had a very successful year. Best since 2005,” said coach Ryan Bullett. “Winning at Davis ... I had been trying to do that for a long time and we talked about it a lot. But if we hadn’t beaten West Jordan, I don’t know how important it would still be.”

On that memorable play, freshman quarterback Drew Jensen couldn’t rely on his best runners – Uaea and Osa Masina. The Bengals’ backs averaged



Osa Masina dives into the end zone to score one of his two touchdowns against Fremont.

almost six yards per carry during the season running behind a talented line.

On this play, Jensen’s only option was to hurl a deep “Hail Mary” pass.

“We were dead in the water, but a lot of kids kept believing that something would happen,” Bullett recalled. “The

2012 results (8-5, 2-3)

Date	Opponent	W/L	Score
Aug. 17	at Davis	W	21-14
Aug. 24	FREMONT	W	27-0
Aug. 31	at Sky View	W	30-21
Sept. 7	at American Fork	W	27-7
Sept. 14	PLEASANT GROVE	W	17-16
Sept. 21	at Alta*	L	31-48
Sept. 28	COTTONWOOD*	L	35-42
Oct. 5	WEST JORDAN*	W	20-14
Oct. 12	at Jordan*	L	14-42
Oct. 17	at Copper Hills*	W	49-13
Oct. 22	vs. Cottonwood%	L	0-20
	vs. West Jordan%	W	14-7
Oct. 27	at Lone Peak#	L	17-24

* - Region 3 games. % - Play-in game
- 5A playoffs. Home games in CAPS

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BRIGHTON FOOTBALL: 2012 season recap



LEFT: Brad Wallace. MIDDLE: Josh Menna congratulates Uaea Masina. RIGHT: Alec McArdle makes a leaping catch.

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play was 89-Jet and *he had to catch it.*"

Alec McArdle leaped between two defenders to catch it about the 10-yard line. He took two steps toward the goal line, but suddenly dropped the ball and it scooted into the end zone. As fans from both sides of the field screamed as loud as they could, McArdle caught up to the ball and dove on it with about a foot to spare.

It was McArdle's second reception of the season and his only touchdown.

"I didn't know what to think when I caught that ball; I just ran," McArdle said. "Then I dropped it and thought, 'Oh crap, I have to get it, no matter what.' When he (the nearby official) signaled touchdown, it was just happiness. We're going to state."

It was the fourth time in the last five years the Bengals were forced to play an extra game to make the postseason, and the first time they won. Despite injury problems to the Masina brothers, Brighton was in every game. The season finally ended in the first round of the 5A playoffs when the Bengals lost 24-17 to defending champ Lone Peak.

"We had a tough schedule, and our region was really tough," said Bullett. "In the first five games, we were plus-10 (in turnovers) and had a lot of momentum. Overall, the kids really battled."

Offensive lineman Jackson Barton, a 6-foot-8, 270-pound junior, was named first team all-state. Osa Masina made second team in one newspaper and Uaea was in the other. The two brothers played both ways and combined for almost 1,300 rushing yards. Uaea also had two kickoff returns for touchdowns and received a scholarship from the University of Utah.

The strength of the team was clearly the line – on both sides of the ball. Led by Barton (who also accepted an offer from Utah), Josh Menna, Ethan Finlinson, Lowell Groberg, Tyson Aldridge, Aaron Sleight, J.J. Mahe and others, they had a great size advantage. In most games, Brighton's running game controlled the clock and kept the pressure off Jensen, who rarely – if ever – hurt the team, despite his youth.

"He had a good season," Bullett said. "He did everything we asked him to."

Isaiah Kaufusi, Chandler Gee and Tyson Reid were capable receivers. On defense, Kekoa Kane easily led the team in tackles. Kaufusi was also a force. He and McArdle topped the team in interceptions.

The Bengals didn't win state. They didn't win region and, in fact, barely made the playoffs. But they did it, and in a memorable fashion.