

# Tommy Ligman:

His passion created big plays and caught on with his teammates

By Bruce Smith  
Matchup

The Copper Hills-American Fork football game on Sept. 16, 2011 was an example of what the Grizzlies had in Tommy Ligman.

After the 2010 football season ended, he had had enough. At just 5-foot-7 and 170 pounds, Ligman led a group of Grizzly players into coach Kai Kapele's office and said they were ready to prepare for the following year.

Copper Hills had just finished a 0-10 season and Kapele wasn't certain how he would motivate his players. But he learned something about Ligman that day.

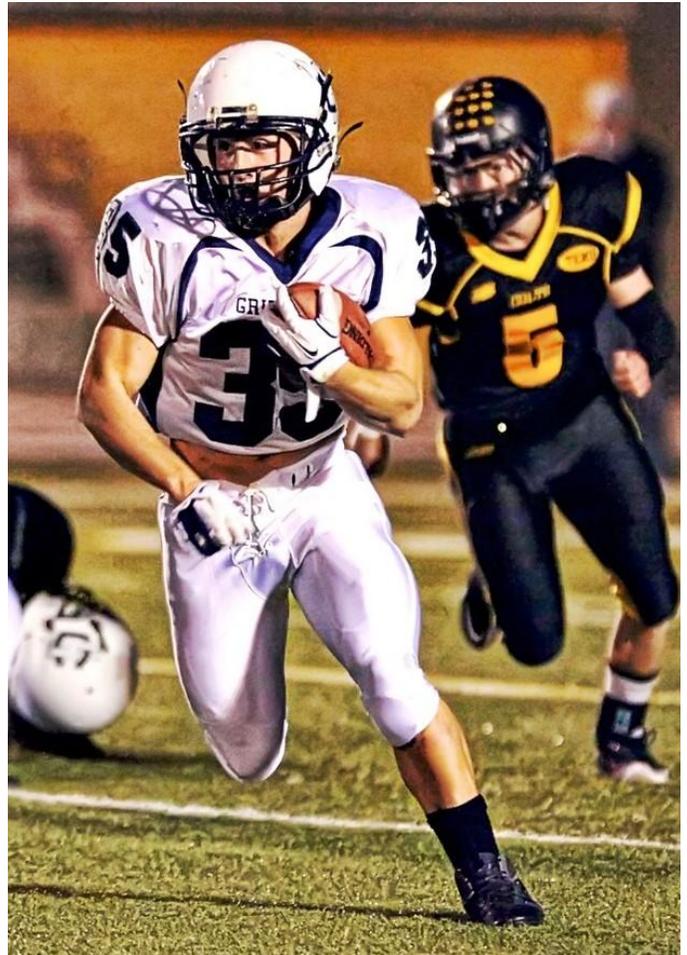
"He'll support the team all the way," Kapele said. "He's a gladiator."

Ligman and several other players were in the weight room for much of the offseason, and led the Grizzlies' charge in 2011. Ligman knew his senior season would probably be his last on the football field and wanted something more to remember.

"Football is my main sport," Ligman said. "I played soccer growing up, but I moved here in the fourth grade (from California) and football has been my passion since."

He tried to pass that passion to his teammates, and it worked. He played a big role in the Grizzlies' offense and defense. He was the team's top rusher with 797 yards and led the team with eight touchdowns. On defense, he was the third-leading tackler and always near the action.

The big changes in the Grizzlies started in the summer at selected 7-on-7 passing tournaments and camps. However, nobody really knew how it would translate when the actual season started. Once the opener arrived, things



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- Tommy Ligman

happened fast.

Despite a more conservative offensive approach, Ligman rushed for 93 yards and completed 2-of-2 passes for 63 yards as Copper Hills went to Taylorsville and won, 27-18.

That ended the long losing streak, and the smiles in the locker room afterward were contagious.

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In-between, there were several highlights, created by victories and the team’s new attitude.

The victory at Taylorsville started it, but two weeks later, Ligman rushed for 156 yards and tied a school record with four touchdowns as Copper Hills thrilled the home crowd with a win over Hillcrest.

The next home game welcomed the biggest crowd of the season and there was more celebrating. The Grizzlies’ offense had trouble moving the ball, but Ligman and Zach Watts returned fumbles for touchdowns as Copper Hills rallied to beat American Fork.

What happened when the clock ran out – at least to Ligman – was surreal.

“It was awesome,” he said. “The fans rushed the field. It was the greatest feeling ever. It brought me to tears. We were 3-2 and were heroes at that point.”

Everything Ligman and his teammates had worked so hard for was finally happening. The memories of just one win in the last two years had been erased. Despite playing in a more-difficult region, Copper Hills was a contender.

“We had kids who played with heart,” said Kapele. “Tommy Ligman was our leader. He played

hurt, but that drive kept him playing and the other kids caught on.”

It didn’t matter that Copper Hills didn’t win a region game. The important part was they didn’t quit and there were instances when that was obvious.

Another of Ligman’s favorite memories came late in the season at Cottonwood. Ligman rushed for 120 yards and scored twice. The game’s biggest play, in Ligman’s opinion, came late when he went out on a slant pattern.

Quarterback Aaron Khan’s pass was deflected by an athletic Cottonwood defender, but snatched out of the air by Ligman, who outran the entire Colt secondary and went 69 yards for a touchdown.

It may not have been the Grizzlies’ longest play from scrimmage all season, but it was the most surprising. It also was sent to the website Maxpreps.com and was tabbed one of the best high school plays of the year.

How long that video will remain on Maxpreps? Nobody knows. But it is something Ligman can always treasure.

Ligman said he would like to remain active in sports as he gets older. After the season, he received a scholarship at Dixie State. Ligman said that he hoped to get involved in special education.

It’s possible his passion there will continue to be contagious and help others.