



By Kellis Robinett

Eric Thorton admired the championship trophy like it was a priceless artifact straight out of an Indiana Jones movie.

Next to him, teammates gathered for pictures, and every time it looked like they had taken enough [snapshots](#) to properly savor the moment, someone came swooping in to demand they pose for a few more.

And Grayson Laurino, the game's offensive MVP, really got to live it up. Before the Boise quarterback could change into his street clothes, he was signing footballs for a group of young fans.

It was some celebration all right.

Especially following an exhibition game.

But Saturday's Idaho High School All-Star Football Game at Holt Arena — won 33-30 by Team Treasure Valley over Team Idaho — had a very November feel to it. Like it meant something big.

By the middle of the fourth quarter, I'm sure everyone on the field felt nervous in some way.

One team was trying to win with a storybook ending. The other was trying to avoid humiliation.

This was the Oilers vs. the Bills in the 1993 NFL Playoffs. This was Boise State vs. Oklahoma in the Fiesta Bowl. This was Rocco Mediate vs. Tiger Woods at the U.S. Open. No matter who won, someone was walking away in tears.

On this day, that team happened to be Team Idaho. Its extraordinary comeback bid fell one minute short.

It trailed 27-0 with just seconds to go in the third quarter but scored 30 straight points behind the brilliant play of Blackfoot quarterback Chase Monson to take what looked like a commanding 30-27 lead with a minute remaining in the fourth quarter.

Monson, scrambling all over the field, led Team Idaho to four touchdowns in a matter of 11:36. He looked like the best player on the field, and Team Idaho's defense didn't look bad either. During that run, Blackfoot defensive end Eric Torgerson and Pocatello linebacker Tyler Naftz did whatever they wanted.

With 60 more seconds of strong play, they would have been the ones signing autographs after the game. All they needed was for Team Treasure Valley to step aside and let them finish off one of the most incredible comebacks ever witnessed at Holt Arena. It would have been the perfect ending to a high school career.

But Team Treasure Valley was unwilling. It wouldn't let the game it dominated for three quarters be taken from them so easily.

On the first play from scrimmage after losing the lead, Laurino hit Thorton for a 58-yard touchdown pass to swing the game back in Team Treasure Valley's favor.

Afterward, Thorton said it was expected.

"We were never nervous, and we never panicked," Thorton said. "The play we scored a touchdown on, we knew it was going to work. We practiced it all week, and knew it was going to be there at some point. It didn't matter whether we had 10 minutes or 10 seconds to score on that last drive. We just knew we were going to score."

How players could sustain that type of confidence after watching a 27-point lead evaporate is beyond me.

It's not often that you see the struggling — or in this case, choking — team deliver a knockout blow to its opponent like that. Comebacks are hardly ever answered with another comeback. You didn't see Warren Moon score a decisive touchdown to hold off the Bills, or an Oklahoma linebacker tackle Ian Johnson on the Statue of Liberty play.

But like a veteran bully, Team Treasure Valley had no problem doing it at all.

I guess that's why they call them All-Stars.