

You can't win them all

Miners fell short in bid for third title but the program is still at its peak, and continued to play at a high level

By Bruce Smith
Matchup

These days, a lot is expected from the Bingham Miners football team.

Coming into the 2011 season, they were the two-time defending 5A state champions. They had won 24 straight games and were nationally ranked. The local media suggested coach Dave Peck's 2010 squad was the best Utah high school football team ever.

"We had a lot to live up to," admitted Peck. "And we won't back down from any challenge. The kids know this is big-time football and they are part of it."

The Miners didn't quite make it to a third straight title, but it wasn't without trying. Bingham finished with a 9-3 overall record and second place in Region 4. Its winning streak eventually reached a school record 26 games. Bingham lost to a quality Southern California school and the two teams that eventually met for the state title – Lone Peak and Fremont.

"If you would have asked me at the start of the season, I'd say, '9-3 is good,'" Peck said. "But at the end, I felt like we could have been in that state championship game. Losing to Fremont was a letdown and the kids wanted another shot at Lone Peak."

Bingham lost 15 Division I players from last year's team, and a lot of younger players were asked to step up. The Miners also got big plays from guys like Jared Afalava, Brady Lail, Daniel Palepoi, Hayden Weichers, Will Nasilai, Poasi Taukeiaho and others.

"We played a lot of kids," Peck said. "We had 13 sophomores and some freshmen come up. That should pay dividends."

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Junior **Hayden Weichers** played a big role at wide receiver and special teams and is expected back next year.

2011 results (9-3)

Date	Opponent	W/L	Score
Aug. 19	WEST JORDAN	W	45-28
Aug. 27	vs. Alta	W	21-18
Sept. 3	vs. Orange Luthern	L	7-42
Sept. 9	at Layton	W	47-13
Sept. 16	COTTONWOOD	W	37-0
Sept. 23	at Riverton*	W	45-14
Sept. 29	LONE PEAK*	L	24-45
Oct. 7	at American Fork*	W	35-7
Oct. 14	PLEASANT GROVE*	W	41-0
Oct. 21	at Lehi*	W	49-0
Oct. 28	KEARNS#	W	38-0
Nov. 4	at Fremont#	L	20-27

* - Region 4 games. Home games in CAPS. # - 5A playoff games

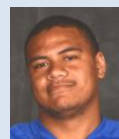
All-state selections



Afalava



Palepoi



Taukeiaho

BINGHAM FOOTBALL: 2011 season recap



LEFT: Daniel Palepoi had over 1,100 yards rushing.

MIDDLE: QB Brady Lail

RIGHT: Bingham fans showed their support at home and away games all season.

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Bingham won its opener 45-28 over West Jordan, but it was costly. The Miners were immediately hampered by injuries. They lost wide receiver Josh Davis, offensive lineman Thomas Hippler and linebacker Taylor Hansen. An injury (concussion) to Palepoi midway through the Lone Peak game played a key role in that outcome.

Running backs like Tonga Manu, Tisi Tuifua and others stepped up, and the strong-armed Lail provided a more precise passing attack. Peck said Bingham won't accept any kind of dropoff. Bingham will lose 34 seniors, but everything is in place these days for the Miners to simply reload.

The future looks bright. The Miners' junior varsity and sophomore teams each finished with 7-1 records. With Lone Peak and Fremont being senior-laden, Bingham should again be a candidate to win it all in 2012.

Peck said there were many highlights of 2011. Bingham had its share of local media attention. The Miners played before huge home crowds and were usually the primary game on every opponent's schedule. Bingham played on a local television a couple of times, defeated rival Alta for the fourth straight time at Rice-Eccles Stadium, visited sunny Southern California over Labor Day weekend, thrilled its home fans with a thrashing of Cottonwood at homecoming and

made it to the 5A quarterfinals.

Three players – Afalava, Palepoi and Taukeiaho – made the all-state team. At press time, Afalava proved to be the lone Division I recruit, signing a letter-of-intent to play at Nebraska. He anchored a defense that will go down in history as one of the school's best ever.

While the offense had its bright points, the defense gave up an average of less than 16 points per game. If you don't count the night Lone Peak put up 45 with its MVP quarterback – Chase Hansen – that statistic is even more impressive.

After the Lone Peak loss, the defense gave up just seven points – a single touchdown – in wins over American Fork, Pleasant Grove and Lehi, plus its first-round playoff opponent, Kearns. Three straight shutouts tied a school record.

“What impressed me the most was how we came back from the Lone Peak game,” Peck said. “The kids were disappointed, but they played their guts out after that.”

There were no region or state championships this year, but Bingham football is still at its peak. After over 100 years, the football program is a driving force in the student's tradition and confidence. It continues to make everyone associated proud to be a Miner and – for that – there is no end in sight.