

To be a champion, Miners need guys like Park

By Bruce Smith
MatchupUT.com

Ben Park didn't make the All-region or All-state teams. He wasn't on the field when the Bingham Miners won the 5A state championship.

But that evening at Rice-Eccles Stadium, there wasn't a prouder moment for the senior.

"It was such an incredible feeling of joy ... of relief," Park said. "The thing that was going through my mind was total elation. After seven or eight years of my life (playing football), you want to end it the right way."

Park wore uniform No. 41, and was chosen by coach **Dave Peck** to be recognized in this article because he exemplified the team concept.

Park was a reserve linebacker who played mostly on special teams for Bingham during the 2009 season. The Miners, however, were not just a one-man team. Each player had a specific role that – when combined – was the best high school football team in Utah.

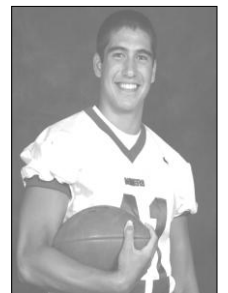
"There was a lot of pressure on us, but it was not unwanted," Park said. "We expected a lot from ourselves. Before every game, there were sleepless nights. Every game I felt anxious."



Ben Park (No. 41) and Andrew Clark combine to bring down the Trinity ball carrier during the Miners' game at the Dallas Cowboys new stadium.

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For Park, however, the responsibility he felt was off the field as much as on.

"My role is to support the team," he said. "I've been playing with these guys for

seven years, I've done everything I can to help inspire them."

Nowhere was that more

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BINGHAM FOOTBALL: Ben Park profile

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noticeable than the championship game. Playing in front of their biggest crowd of the season at the University of Utah, the Miners found themselves trailing 17-7 at halftime.

In the locker room, Peck spoke briefly to the team and then he – and the rest of the coaches – left.

“I just told them that this where we leave it all on the field,” Peck said. “Once you get to the turf, it’s anybody’s game. They had to look inside themselves and make the effort.”

The outcome, of course, is now well known. The trophy, which will sit at Bingham High forever, will never reveal what really happened that day.

“It was pretty crazy,” said Park. “We were all pretty angry with ourselves. Coach Peck just let us decide what was going to happen. A lot of players said a lot of things. After that, everything started changing.”

Brady Measom returned the third-quarter kickoff 52 yards to set up a touchdown and, a few minutes later, **Travis McRae** intercepted a Davis pass that ended its drive and gave the Miners another scoring opportunity.

Stefan Cantwell ran for three second-half touchdowns and the Miners were champions.

It culminated a long season, which started for many players after Bingham lost to Alta in the 2008 state finals.

Along the way, Bingham won 13 games, beat Alta twice, won the Region 3 title, spent most of the season ranked No. 1, and flew to Dallas for a matchup against Texas powerhouse Trinity.

“We fought hard, but we didn’t play to our potential,” said Park of the Trinity game, a 42-21 loss.

Park said he recalls the excitement of the trip, but what he’ll remember most was that his friend, **Brandon Lambert**, was injured.

Bingham’s “team” legacy

- * - **BINGHAM** has won 24 of its last 26 games.
- * - **BINGHAM** has won its last 19 home games (meaning it has never lost in its refurbished stadium).
- * - **BINGHAM** ended a three-game losing streak to rival Alta.
- * - This season, **BINGHAM** scored 77 touchdowns; 45 rushing, 22 passing, seven by the defense and three from the special teams.
- * - This season, **BINGHAM** led all 5A schools in scoring, averaging 39.4 points per game.
- * - This season, 21 different players scored for **BINGHAM**.
- * - **BINGHAM** trailed in each of its first four games.
- * - This season, **BINGHAM** defeated its Region 3 opponents by an average score of 41-8.



“He got a concussion, and I was really worried about him,” Park said. “He had to be hospitalized and had to stay there a day later.”

Peck remained with him, and the two flew back to Salt Lake City separate from the team.

Lambert recovered and continued to play a major role in the Miners’ success. At the time, however, he may not have known the affect his injury had on the other players on the team.

“I will remember all of us working together every afternoon,” Park said. “We all came together ... and it finally clicked for us.”

For Park, he felt ended the season with 14 tackles. He felt his best game was against Kearns. Although the statistics show him with just two tackles that night, he received a lot of playing time in the Miners’ 47-13 victory.

But he also was part of a championship team – a feat only a few teams earn each year. It was also his senior year, and it ended in the perfect way, regardless of where he stood on the field.