

# Taylor Thompson:

Best memories were of fellow linemen who brightened injury-riddled year

By Bruce Smith  
Matchup

Taylor Thompson's best memories of the 2011 season won't be the team's won/loss record. It will be the players who went through it with him.

Thompson, one Rocky's biggest players at 6-foot-3 and 285 pounds, started at offensive left guard. He was moved from tackle during the offseason to help prepare him for college ball.

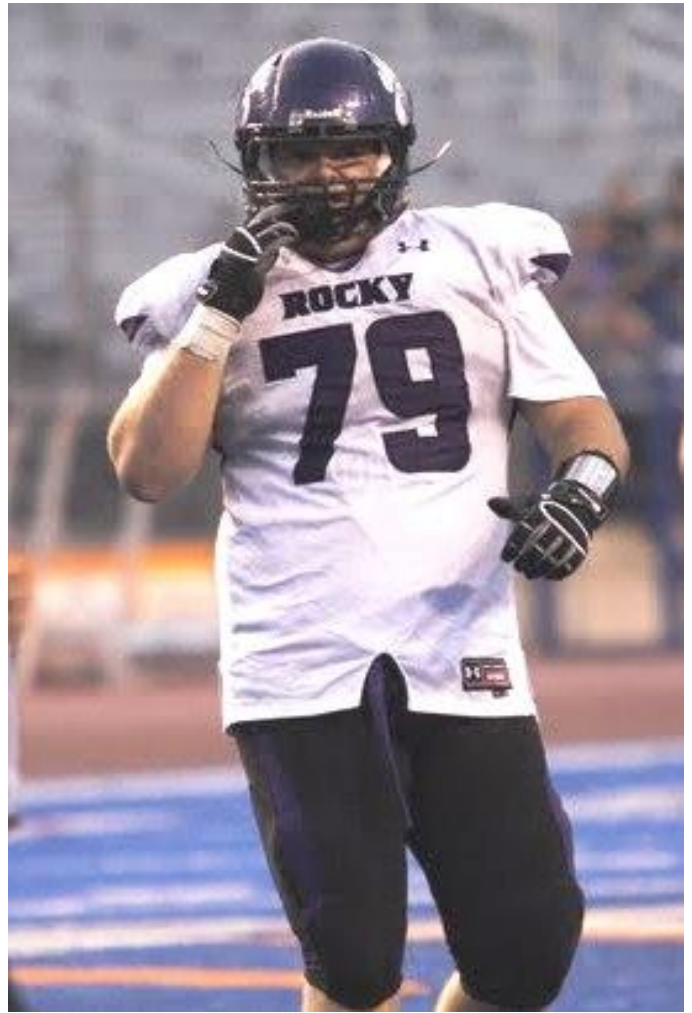
"I'm not tall enough to be a tackle in college, so coach (Jason Warr) moved me," he said. "Going from tackle to guard, the defensive tackles are a lot heavier, but they are slower. I also had to pull. My speed and quickness had to be faster. You have to be aggressive to get those big boys moving."

He and his fellow linemen had a lot in common. After all of Rocky's success in 2010 (a 9-2 record and 5A playoff berth), the team lost 26 seniors, including offensive linemen Jim Bagley and Kevin Belnap. This year's regrouped and had its share of great moments but Thompson said the best part was the friendships that grew.

"It really felt good to us," he said. "On Saturdays, all of us linemen would get together and go bowling, or hang out at somebody's house.

"We'd have breakfasts with the whole entire offensive line at the Express Café," he added. "They serve big platters of food. We had the same seats, and the same waitress every time. It was a tradition added on."

On the field, the linemen – Thompson, Eli McCullough, Andrew Belnap, Alex Homer and James Tucker, tried to create holes for Rocky's running backs and extra time for sophomore QB Riley Bradshaw. With the exception of the last two



**Taylor Thompson** anchored Rocky's offensive line and played two different positions in his career here.

games of the season, the Grizzlies' offense clicked.

Rocky averaged 35 points per game, and even put up 44 against Vallivue and 41 vs. Meridian. Most of the players said their best game was at Mountain View, when the offense put up two touchdowns in the final quarter to take a 24-17 win.

Thompson, however, liked the Borah game best, even if it did result in a narrow loss.

"It was the effort I gave," he recalled. "I was crushing kids, and I felt satisfied with myself. Our offense played well in the second half. We were slow to start, but we motivated each other."

The Borah game was also where Thompson had his best memory.

"I was going against their defensive tackle.

*Continued on next page*

## ROCKY FOOTBALL: Senior profile



**TOP LEFT:** Taylor Thompson poses with his parents on “Senior Night.”

**TOP RIGHT:** Thompson with fellow linemen Andrew Belnap, Eli McCullough and Garret Munson.

**MIDDLE:** Thompson watches the action after being injured.

**MIDDLE RIGHT:** Thompson and other linemen vs. Borah

**LOWER RIGHT:** Thompson in the season opener vs. Coeur d’Alene.



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It was a run. I picked him up and threw him back on his back and then laid on top of him. He was very surprised,” he said.

If Borah was his best memory, the worst was the Meridian game, when he injured his foot and had to sit out four games. He said the incident wasn’t bad enough to require surgery, but he had to use crutches and watch from the sidelines until he was ready to return in the season finale against Centennial.

“Watching from the sidelines was aggravating,” he said. “A sophomore – Isaac Reyna – filled in for me. I felt like his mentor and tried to guide him to be a better football player, and he really improved. When I came back, I did all right, but I still had sore spots in my foot.”

After the season ended, though, the foot healed and Thompson was looking forward to cheering on his friends at Rocky’s basketball games, and then competing in the shot put and discus in track and field. As a junior, he finished fifth at the state meet in the discus.

Thompson also hoped to earn a football scholarship. By early December, he had received letters from Washington State, Idaho, Boise State, Oregon State, Eastern Washington and Idaho State, but nothing certain.

