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Rocky Mountain High School football team hosts Veterans Appreciation Night

Football team honors fallen Idaho soldier

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By: McKenna King

MERIDIAN, Idaho — A special night at Rocky Mountain High School as the football team dedicates the evening to U.S. veterans, in honor of Idaho's most recent fallen soldier.

A pretty memorable evening under the lights at the Rocky football field. The football field was lined with American flags, and the team put on quite the production as they honored Army Sergeant First Class Dustin Ard and all veterans for Veterans Appreciation Night.

"I think it's important that the community knows that one of our own changed their Blue Star to Gold, and it's good for us to be here to support them," said Dan McKnight, freshman offensive coordinator at Rocky Mountain High School and head organizer of the event.

Idaho native and Army SFC Dustin Ard was killed in combat in Afghanistan in August.

Ard attended the Meridian Medical Technical Charter School, not Rocky Mountain High, but that didn't stop the Rocky football team from rallying together to honor him.

"Somebody that we know and can relate to, is one of our own, people we can relate to, I think it's important that our kids understand that, you know, there's a lot going on in life and they need to take advantage of opportunities that we give them," said Chris Culig, head coach of the Rocky Mountain High School football team.

It was a quick turnaround. The team threw the entire event together in just three weeks in honor of Dustin and all veterans and their families.

"Blue Mothers is going to be here, and they basically put together a lot of care packages for soldiers abroad, so we're going to recognize them," said Culig, as well as the Gold Star families — those who have lost soldiers at war —



including Idaho's most recent Gold Star family, the Ards.

"They've been fighting in Afghanistan for 18 years, and these football players on the field, next year if they enlist in the military, they could be fighting in a war that started before they were even born," said McKnight.

Gerrit Tamminga is one of the senior football players at Rocky that plans to enlist.

"It's really special for me, because I'm going to go to the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs," said Tamminga.

And Gerrit isn't the only Grizzly preparing to serve his country.

"I know a couple of kids on the team that are going to the Armed Forces," said Tamminga.

It was a crew honored and proud to wear the red, white, and blue as they sported it on each of their jersey sleeves.

"On the right, we've got the stripes, and then stars on the blue on the right," said Tamminga.

Dan McKnight, who organized the event said, "We wanted to connect the importance of doing something full-speed, being a part of something bigger than yourself, and honoring those that give us the right to play this game on a Friday night."

Rocky Mountain High School beat Centennial High School in the football game 65-0.