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Sariya Khan • theCharger

Senior defensive back **Tias Hilliard** reacts to the final play of the MHSAA Class 5A state championship game on Dec. 5. Hilliard managed to pick off Wayne County quarterback Reggie Stewart once; however, it was not enough, as the Chargers fell to the War Eagles 45-41 in the final seconds of the fourth quarter.



Charlie the Charger sulks after the loss against Wayne County.

The Chargers lost a 14-point lead, and ultimately suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Wayne County War Eagles. Here's the game story:



**45** POINTS WERE SCORED IN THE 1ST Q. ALONE



ONLY LED FOR A TOTAL OF: **3:07**



148 Receiving Yards

278 All-Purp. Yards



550 Passing Yards

### JACK ABRAHAM

WAS RULED OUT OF BOUNDS

ON THE 1 YD. LINE WITH :04

# Oxford drops third consecutive title in late heartbreaking finish at the Vaught

By **Davis McCool**  
sports editor

With merely 11 seconds left in the MHSAA Class 5A state championship, senior quarterback Jack Abraham scrambled to the left and made a mad dash for the corner of the end zone. He was marked out-of-bounds on the 1-yard line, and the Chargers walked home with their third consecutive runner-up trophy.

"Their defensive ends got around our left tackle, creating a hole, and I went for it," Abraham said. "It was just there, and the field looked open. When I looked up, I was expecting a touchdown signal, but it wasn't there."

The Wayne County War Eagles, by miracle or not, walked away with a state championship trophy, with a 45-41 win.

"I've been in some crazy ones, I've been in some where we won," Chargers head coach Johnny Hill said. "That's part of football - you play until the horn goes off. Life ain't fair all the time, that's just the way it is."

The game featured the end of many record-shattering Chargers. Hill announced his retirement earlier this year, and his final game was an emotional one for his players.

Alongside Hill, seniors Abraham, D.K. Metcalf, and many more played their last game in blue and gold jerseys, but they admit that they left nothing on the field.

"I laid it all out there. I gave 110 percent effort on the field," Abraham said. "It didn't turn out the way we wanted to, but I feel like the offense played one of the greatest games ever. We executed perfectly."



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"I would break every single bone in my body for a state champs ring."

- Jack Abraham

**550**  
PASSING YARDS  
(SCHOOL RECORD)

The War Eagles posed a formidable threat to Oxford's aerial attack, led by Dandy Dozen player and Ole Miss commit, Benito Jones.

Jones lined up as a nose tackle for the majority of the game, and while he was bottled up by junior center Colton Skidmore, the offense flourished.

"We were executing on a high level," Abraham said. "The game plan was perfect, just about as good as it gets."

At one point in the first quarter, the Chargers had scored on three consecutive drives, leading to a halftime lead, 28-17.

The third quarter was another offensive shootout, and the two teams went into the fourth quarter bearing a "last team with the ball wins" mindset.

However, while Jones was bottled up on the defensive side of the ball, he was the ace-in-the-hole for Wayne County's final offensive drive. He caught the game winning touchdown catch, and put the War Eagles up by four with 1:17 left.

On Oxford's final face-saving drive, Abraham was short on his stretch for the end zone, and the final play featured Metcalf's outstretched arms falling just inches short of a state championship.

Both Metcalf's and Abraham's dives were highly debated following the game, and Abraham even broke his collarbone on the play, but the end result wasn't affected.

"I don't regret making the dive one bit," Abraham said. "I would break every bone in my body to get one of those state championship rings."

"We just lost the state title for the third straight year," Metcalf said. "That was tough."

# Hill, seniors nonetheless claim spot in history at OHS

## Sports Column

Davis McCool

In the final seconds of the state championship, quarterback Jack Abraham rushed to the end zone, knocked down the pylon, and scored the game-winning touchdown. Except he didn't. Abraham was ruled out on the 1-yard line, and the Chargers would fail to capitalize and score. Just like that, Johnny Hill, Jack Abraham and D.K. Metcalf were done. In a matter of 11 seconds, the savior of 2016 was no more, but the legacy that they left will endure forever.

It is hard to imagine a Charger football team without Johnny Hill and "The 'Stache," but then again, he did have a pretty talented group of players.

Hill was thrown into a wild thrill ride in his early days at Oxford, but his greatest team (according to Oxford) was his last.

Led by quarterback Jack Abraham and receiver D.K. Metcalf, Hill's past three years have been everything but uneventful. He has taken his team to a state championship for the three past years, and he has only lost four regular-season games in that time span.

Also in that time span, his offense has shattered multiple Oxford records, and won many state awards. Among them are Gatorade Best Player, two Dandy Dozen players, two Miss.-AL game invitees, one The Opening player, among more. Hill may not have raised these tremendous players himself, but he helped shape them into

some of the greatest this school has ever seen.

However, the elephant in the room still remains: his record at the state title, 0-4 as an Oxford head coach.

A heckler, as one could only call him, on Twitter following this year's loss, pointed that out and wondered "if (Hill) would come back for one more year just to lose in the state championship one more time."

The outpouring of responses that were generated by this tweet is all that one needs to know about Coach Hill's character and his impact on every kid to come through his program.

From administrators to teachers to students, his support raged like wildfire, and even though he may be known as a no-nonsense, "get-the-job done" coach on the field, his methods of impacting people are endless, and the results are obvious.

There may be no better testament to Hill's legacy than a picture of him taken after Oxford's last regular-season game this year, of his players hoisting him up, and Hill tipping his cap to the crowd.

Even though his supporting cast in the past couple of years has been nothing short of perfection, there can be no other living proof of the Oxford's success on the football field than in coach Johnny Hill. But more importantly, there is no other testament to the success of the men that come through his program than Johnny Hill and his unconventional, foolproof method of perfecting kids on and off the football field. To sum up the feelings of all of Oxford High, thank you Coach Hill.

# JOHNNY HILL

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\*As Head Coach at OHS



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