

BIXBY SPARTAN FOOTBALL

THE HOLT REPORT

8X STATE CHAMPIONS



The Holt Report

2022 POSTSEASON UPDATE



Bixby Well Represented at Under Armour All-America Game

As Bixby High's football program steadily developed into a state powerhouse, the Spartans also began attracting national recognition in recent seasons.

In 2020, Bixby's home district game with Booker T. Washington was televised by ESPNU. The Spartans, led by speedster Braylin Presley, trounced the Hornets 70-21.

Last season, Bixby's winning streak - which reached 58 games - was recognized midway through the 2022 season as NBC Today's early morning show visited with chilly Spartan head coach Loren Montgomery, players, spirit squads and the band on the Lee Snider Stadium turf.

And the Spartans 2022 regular season finale with Jenks - witnessed by an overflow crowd - was televised by ESPN2. Jenks ended the Spartan streak with a 38-35 win. Bixby returned the favor in the state semifinals, trouncing the Trojans 28-14, a couple of weeks later.

A month after the season ended, Bixby was well represented at the 2023 Under Armour All-America Game, featuring the nation's finest high school footballers. The game was held Jan. 3, 2023, in Orlando, Florida at Camping World Stadium. Practices were held at Disney's Wide World of Sports.

Bixby's all-state tight end Luke Hasz, a four-star recruit who signed with Arkansas, was selected to play in the game as a member of Team Phantom. In addition, Spartan coach Montgomery was asked to serve as offensive coordinator for Team Phantom. It was an honor for both as well as for the Spartan program.

Hasz was the first Spartan selected to play in the Under Armour All-America game. Former Spartan kicker/punter Reis Vernon, a 2020 graduate and current Kansas Jayhawk punter, was selected for the Army All-America game his senior season.

"Luke was actually asked to play in the game a couple of years ago after he did really well in an Under Armour camp as a sophomore," coach Montgomery said. "They called later asking if I wanted to coach in the game and during the season they asked if I wanted to be the offensive coordinator.

"I told them I hadn't called plays in 10 or 11 years but they said you have though so I said okay. It was good since I don't do that anymore ... it was good to knock the rust off and have to use my brain in that way," he added.

"It was really good for the program because of the momentum we had while being on ESPN twice and being ranked in the Top 25 the last two years. We've got a good Twitter presence ... I feel like people are starting to recognize our name."

With limited parameters, Team Phantom defeated Team Speed, 14-7. Running back Cedric Baxter, a Texas signee from Orlando, Florida, scored on a 13-yard run for an early 7-0 lead. Team Phantom's Zachariah Branch, a Southern California signee and five-star wide receiver from Bishop Gorman High in Las Vegas, Nevada, found daylight for a 93-yard punt return and a 14-0 Team Phantom lead.

Playing quarterback for Team Phantom was Iowa State signee 6-7, 230-pounder JJ Kohl of Ankney, Iowa. He was 11-of-18 passing.

Team Speed's lone score came on a 23-yard TD pass from quarterback Jackson Arnold, an Oklahoma signee from Denton (Texas) Guyer to Utah signee Mikey Matthews from Mission Viejo, California.

"We didn't score many points, but it was cool playing in Camping World Stadium. I had to teach the coaches the terminology and then teach a bunch of new players the terminology," Montgomery said. "The parameters for the game allowed you to only line up in a couple of formations and you couldn't motion. The defense had to play one defense and couldn't blitz.

"The coaches got in a day ahead of time, so we had one day to have meetings and teach the coaches. I was impressed with all the research they did on the kids," he said. "I was pretty star struck with all those kids ... the vast majority were super competitors.

"Our group had four or five kids going to USC and nine that were going to Alabama. Oklahoma had about eight or nine playing in the game ... they had a good recruiting class.

"Luke did great. I think it was a big confidence boost for him going off to college that he could play with these guys. He had a big nine or 10-yard reception on a bootleg and a bunch of really good blocks," coach Montgomery added.

Montgomery's team featured Texas A&M signee David Hicks, a 6-4, 290-pound defensive lineman from Katy, Texas; Clemson signee Peter Woods, a 6-3, 270-pound defensive lineman from Alabaster, Alabama, and South Carolina signee Nyckoles Harbor, a 6-5, 225-pound tight end from Washington, D. C.

"Hicks was the No. 1 rated player at his position and the other tight end, Nick Harbor, is a world class sprinter. All the guys came from really good programs," he noted. Woods was credited with three tackles, including two for loss in the game.

"I shared a lot of information and made a lot of contacts," Montgomery said. "Our defensive coordinator (Darren Sunkitt) was from East St. Louis (Illinois). They were one of the top 10 teams in the country last year and they're coming to our team camp." East St. Louis was 12-2 last season while winning the Illinois Class 6A state championship

Besides working with the nation's best high school football players, Montgomery also enjoyed family time as he was joined at the Florida resort by wife Jessica, son Guy and daughter Sloane.

"It was awesome. Everything, like the resort we stayed in was first class," Montgomery said. "We were probably 10 minutes from Disney World and Universal Studios. On the first day there I went with them (family) in the morning. Most of the time, they'd go on their own and I would catch up with them later in the day."

Following the Under Armour game, Bixby's talented senior class featured several players signing national letters of intent to play college football during the February signing date.

Bixby's L. Hasz and twin brother Dylan signed with Arkansas and were early enrollees. Spartan defensive back Josh Newkirk signed with Lindenwood University in Saint Charles, Missouri, defensive backs-wide receivers Jakeb Snyder and Cale Fugate are preferred walk-ons at Oklahoma and quarterback Connor Kirby signed with the University of Central Oklahoma.

Also, defensive back-returner Tyson Williams signed with Abilene Christian, kicker Levi Hoffman signed with Northeastern A&M Junior College, quarterback Austin Havens signed with Missouri S&T in Rolla, Missouri and Mason Eberle signed to play lacrosse at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas.

"I think it might be the most kids we've had sign. That's a good group of kids, good leaders. A bunch of them were three-year starters. I'm kind of a homer but I love watching our guys play in college," Coach Montgomery said.

Coach Montgomery and staff are currently involved in spring ball planning while the Spartan gridders continue working in the weight room. Spring drills begin Monday, May 1.

