

# Spartans' Spring Football Practices Underway

**By Ron Holt**

Featuring the largest roster of prospective football players during head coach Loren Montgomery's upcoming 16-year tenure, Bixby High's defending state champion Spartans were full speed ahead when spring practice workouts began Monday (May 19) afternoon at Lee Snider Stadium.

As soon as one season ends the Spartans immediately begin preparing for the next season - working in the weight room before ending the school year with two weeks of spring practice. It's an important time for the coaches to install offensive and defensive plans while looking for players to fill positions lost to graduation.

"These first two weeks we only get an hour during sixth period, doing mostly drills, teaching kids practice structure, some conditioning and trying to get everything installed," coach Montgomery said.

"When we put on pads, we'll start to figure out which guys can play," coach Montgomery said while noting there are 150 prospects out for football at this time. "We'll also restart our install of our offensive and defensive process since everything goes faster with pads on," he said. "You've got to be smart to play football."

Spring practice ends Friday, May 30, with the annual spring game, which starts at 6 p.m. on the Spartan turf. Those attending are asked to donate a case of Gatorade to be used by the Spartans during the upcoming season.

The Spartans look forward to the upcoming season with eight returning defensive starters and six offensive returnees while also looking back on the 2024 season that was a work in progress from start to finish because of the lack of returnees on either side of the ball.

With only five starters returning in 2024, the coaches were diligent about stressing fundamentals, correcting mistakes while also teaching that week's game plan.

"With our group last year, they were so young you had to every single day focus on every single thing, every little detail," coach Montgomery noted. "They matured as the year went on, but you still had to focus on every detail."

"I think we had to coach harder last year than any other year we've had and coach harder every day."

The intense work paid off as the Spartans overcame a season opening 40-21 loss at Owasso and a 30-21 district loss at home to Norman High in the season finale with several impressive regular season victories and a strong, consistent effort in the Class 6A-1 state playoffs.

Bixby was focused and prepared in the state playoffs – defeating Norman North (59-14) at home in the state quarterfinals and turning back improved Edmond Memorial (29-8) in the state semifinals at Claremore which set up a rematch with unbeaten Owasso in the state championship game.

Down 14-0 early against the Rams, Bixby rallied to tie the game 21-all at halftime. Trailing 35-28 late in the game, the Spartans used an aggressive defensive effort to stop the Rams deep in their own territory and BHS capitalized on a 24-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Carson Kirby to Braeden Presley, who made an over-the-shoulder grab to tie the game at 35-all with 1:51 left to force overtime.

Owasso scored first in OT for a 42-35 lead before Bixby quarterback Cooper Parker scored on four-yard TD burst. The Spartans opted to go for a two-point conversion with Parker running into a pileup at the line before breaking outside for the dramatic score that ended an entertaining, gritty contest.

The two-point play is forever etched in Spartan football lore. "It still gives me anxiety when I watch it because one little thing goes wrong it doesn't happen," coach Montgomery said of the game-winner.

"From my vantage point it was bottled up ... they were big, physical and had really good players."

"I was especially proud for a guy like Cooper Parker who was a veteran on the team. Some of the seniors on the team did a good job of holding things together."

**OFFSEASON NOTES** – While Bixby holds spring drills early in May, the official spring practice began Monday (May 19) and continues Monday through Friday until the annual spring game which is set for 6 p.m. Friday, May 30.

Bixby hosts a competitive team camp June 3-5 featuring the Spartans, East St. Louis (Illinois), Edmond Memorial, Tulsa Washington, Broken Arrow, Westmoore and Lawton. BHS coaches will divide their roster into four squads with all Spartans receiving quality reps in the camp.

Spartan players are challenged throughout the summer with weight room workouts and a variety of other competitions including an intersquad 7-on-7 tournament and the day-long Skordle 7-on-7 Showdown which is scheduled Friday, June 20, at Bixby.

Competing in Bixby's Pool A during the Skordle Showdown are Tulsa Union, Sand Springs, Derby (Kansas), Deer Creek-Edmond and Norman North. In Pool B are Stillwater, Bartlesville, Muskogee, Mill Valley, Tulsa Kelley and Collinsville. Oklahoma City McGuinness, Collinsville, Gravette (Arkansas), Cushing, Ada and Broken Bow are in Pool 3.

Jones, Bixby 2, Rejoice Christian, Victory Christian, Fairland and Kiefer will compete in Pool D.

**NOTEBOOK** – Bixby had three new players moving to the district recently, led by Jayson Moll, who rushed for more than 1,000 yards and scored 17 total touchdowns for Owasso last season. The 5-8, 170-pound Moll, a running back and defensive back, will be a senior. A young tight end and offensive line prospect new to the district could also help this season. ... Bixby used the services of a drone to film practice last week, giving coaches a different perspective when grading video. ... Offensively a year ago, Bixby averaged 238.5 yards passing per game while averaging 2.7 touchdown passes per game. As a team, BHS passed for 3,101 yards and 35 TDs. The Spartans averaged 223.5 yards per game rushing and scored 42 TDs on the ground. BHS averaged 45.7 points per game last season, scoring 50 or more points six times. ... Defensively last season, Bixby, as a team, recorded 72.5 tackles for loss and 30.5 sacks while intercepting 23 opponent passes led by returnee Emory Snyder's six interceptions. ... Bixby enters 2025 winning 85 of its last 88 games, 10 state championships in the last 11 seasons and winners of seven consecutive state championships.

**PAY BACK** – Three times during Bixby's amazing state championship run (2014-2024), the Spartans have avenged a regular season loss in the playoffs.

It happened in 2024 when the Spartans suffered a 40-21 season-opening loss at Owasso in the Battle of the Burbs. Bixby, however, ended Owasso's unbeaten season in the 2024 state championship game with a 43-42 overtime victory.

In 2022, the Spartans lost 38-35 at home to Jenks in the regular season finale. A couple of weeks later, Bixby rolled past the Trojans, 28-14, in the state semifinals at Broken Arrow.

And in 2015, the Spartans twice avenged regular season defeats. The Spartans were thumped by Bartlesville, 50-33, in a regular season district game before regrouping to stun the Bruins, 67-21, in the Class 6A-II state semifinals at Owasso.

In the regular season finale at Sand Springs that season, the Sandites blanked the Spartans, 20-0. A few weeks later the two teams met in the Class 6A-II state finals at Tulsa Union with the Spartans capturing a 38-28 victory for the program's second state title.

**ALL-STATE** – Two Spartan seniors were named to the 2025 Oklahoma Coaches Association's East All-State Football Team, both named to the defensive team.

Spartan two-way standout Cooper Parker, a Harding University signee, was named as a linebacker while Brooks Dixon was a defensive back selection. In addition, wide receiver Blake Hogshooter, a University of Houston signee, was a Class 6A All-State by Class selection.

Three Spartans were first-team selections on the Tulsa World's All-State Football Team including offensive linemen Kaeden Penny and Brodderick Shull and linebacker Cooper Parker.

Bixby's second team selections were wide receiver Blake Hogshooter, linebacker Cord Nolan and defensive back Braeden Presley while Spartans named honorable mention were quarterback Carson Kirby, linebacker Trey McGlothlin, defensive backs Brooks Dixon, Emory Snyder and Tyler Wright and kicker Bradley Thao.

**ALL-DISTRICT** – On the Class 6A-1, All-District 1 team announced after the season, Bixby's Cooper Parker was named the league's Linebacker of the Year while teammate Blake Hogshooter was named Wide Receiver of the Year.

Spartans named All-District were running back Bode Cairl, wide receivers Hogshooter and Michael Gilson, offensive linemen Jacob Hamlin, Beckham Hooper and Brodderick Shull, linebacker Cooper Parker, defensive back Brooks Dixon.

Bixby players earning honorable mention recognition were offensive lineman Gavin Montgomery and Ethan Williams, running backs Ayron Cole and Deonte DeJesus, tight ends Dalen Alvidrez and Walker Wells, defensive lineman Peyton Chronister, linebackers Trent Castleberry, Dob Doh and Andrew Horvath and defensive backs Aiden Enriquez, Alex Herring and Travis Meredith.