

Bixby, Owasso Renew Rivalry in Battle of the Burbs

By Ron Holt

After seldom playing in years past, Bixby and Owasso have become regular season and playoff opponents in recent years. The 2025 season is no exception.

In the past three seasons, Bixby and Owasso have battled twice each season – during the QuikTrip sponsored Battle of the Burbs season opener and in the Class 6A-I state playoffs.

The seventh meeting in the recent series, scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Thursday (Aug. 28) at Skelley Field at H. A. Chapman Stadium on the University of Tulsa campus, involves a rematch of the dramatic 2024 Class 6A-I state championship game.

Bixby won 43-42 in overtime in last year's incomparable state championship game witnessed by 6,843 fans at University of Central Oklahoma's Chad Richison Stadium in Edmond.

The Battle of the Burbs features another showdown between two experienced teams that expect to compete again for state championship hardware. Bixby and Owasso are ranked first and second, respectively, according to the Tulsa World's preseason rankings released last weekend. Bixby won four straight games against the Rams prior to last season. In 2024, Owasso handled the inexperienced Spartans, 40-21, at Owasso Stadium in the season opener before Spartan senior Cooper Parker ran for a gutty two-point conversion in overtime to spark BHS to the 43-42 state finals' win. Parker rushed for 81 yards and three scores while also finishing with a solid defensive effort.

The victory lifted Bixby to its seventh straight state championship, 10th state championship in the past 11 seasons and third straight Class 6A-I state crown.

In 2023, Bixby opened the season with a 41-16 win over the Rams at TU while also eliminating Owasso after a 56-14 win in the state semifinals at Sand Springs. In 2022, Bixby defeated Owasso 49-14 in the Battle of the Burbs at TU and 69-6 in the Class 6A-I state finals at UCO. Bixby (11-2) entered last season with only five starters returning but this season, the Spartans feature a battle-tested squad with numerous players who went through the roller coaster 2024 season.

Returning are senior quarterback Carson Kirby, who was 19-25 passing for 229 yards, two touchdowns and no interceptions in last year's title game; senior receiver/defensive back Braeden Presley, who caught seven passes for 126 yards and one TD; senior linebacker/tight end Cord Nolan, who was credited with 13 tackles, six unassisted, and a sack.

In addition, Spartan senior defensive lineman Hecter Garcia finished with nine tackles, including one tackle for a key loss of yards, while DB's Emory Snyder and Tyler Wright recorded pass interceptions.

Owasso also returns several key playmakers from last season's 12-1 team. Junior OHS quarterback Drew Frankenfield passed for 113 yards and two TDs while being intercepted twice in the finals; Jayden Hall rushed 24 times for 202 yards and three TDs while Jaylon Moll, who transferred to Bixby this season, rushed for 132 yards and one TD for the Rams in the finals.

The Rams, led by head coach Bill Blankenship who returned to the helm after a year's absence, return those offensive playmakers and many others from last year's talented squad while senior star defensive lineman Taj Overton headlines a defense also loaded with proven veterans.

With the Zero Week opener quickly approaching, Bixby only had one scrimmage, which came last Friday in the Bixby Fall Classic's half game against Edmond Santa Fe. Owasso was denied a preseason scrimmage after reportedly scrimmaging Mustang this summer.

“We know Owasso has a lot of playmakers,” Bixby’s 16th-year head coach Loren Montgomery said. “It’s a tough opener for us but for the most part since I’ve been here, we’ve opened with really tough opponents.

“We’ve had Jenks, and one year with Mansfield (Texas) Timberview and now Owasso. It’s a good metric to see where you’re at ... it’ll be great film to see where you are as a team. We’ll have to guess at what they might do since we won’t get any film on them, it’s just kind of cold turkey. Owasso also has two new coordinators this year.”

After Antonio Graham left Owasso for Tulsa Union after one season as head coach, Blankenship returned to the program he led to state championships in 2017 and 2019. His son Josh, who was Broken Arrow’s head coach the past four seasons, is the Rams’ offensive coordinator while Steve Neal is the defensive coordinator. Neal was Deer Creek’s defensive coordinator last season.

As expected, Spartan coaches saw positive things during the scrimmage while also focusing on areas needing improvement.

After getting off to a stunning start, Bixby regrouped last Friday to defeat Edmond Santa Fe, 31-7, in a half game at the Bixby Fall Classic at Lee Snider Stadium. In the first Fall Classic half game, Broken Arrow downed Stillwater, 14-7.

Santa Fe scored first as a Wolves’ defensive back caught a pass deflected off a Spartan receiver and returned the interception for a quick touchdown and 7-0 lead. That would be the Wolves’ lone score.

Bixby rallied to score 31 straight points, all in the first half, on a lengthy field goal by senior kicker Bradley Thao and touchdown passes from senior quarterback Carson Kirby to Tyler Wright, Braeden Presley and Cord Nolan while senior newcomer running back Jaylon Moll ended the scoring with a short yardage TD run.

“We had the pick six right off the bat and everybody was frustrated ... that was the mindset after that happened,” coach Montgomery noted. “We’re going to have to get a next play mentality. We’ve got to get better mentally as far as responding to situations.

“I felt like our defense was flying around ... we stopped the run game, and they had to throw it. We’ll see what it looks like on film, but I liked our effort and felt like our guys were flying around the ball.”

BURBS 2024 – Owasso led Bixby 13-7 at halftime of last year’s Battle of the Burbs at Owasso before using two late touchdowns in the fourth quarter in pulling away for the 40-21 victory in front of a large crowd.

Owasso ended with 467 yards of total offense while Bixby compiled 397 total offensive yards. The Spartans turned the ball over three times while the Rams had two turnovers.

BHS quarterback Carson Kirby led the Spartans in rushing with 66 yards on nine carries while passing for 219 yards and one touchdown. He was intercepted twice and sacked five times. Cord Nolan had two receptions for 76 yards and Blake Hogshooter caught seven passes for 43 yards.

Owasso junior Tah’Kari Bethel caught two 28-yard touchdown passes from quarterback Drew Frankenfield and returned a kickoff 99 yards for a score to highlight the Rams’ effort.

NOTABLES – Battle of the Burbs tickets can be purchased for \$11 online at bixbyps.info/botbtix or purchased for \$10 at the gate. Gates at TU open at 6:30 p.m. ... Entering 2025, Bixby has won 85 of its last 88 games. ... Bixby’s returning kicker Bradley Thao kicked a field goal while booming four successful extra-point kicks in the Fall Classic. “He’s gone to all kind of kicking camps this summer and done really well,” Montgomery said of Thao. “His leg is stronger. He competed at some high-level camps and won a couple of them. He’s a good punter, too.” ... In the Tulsa World’s preseason football preview, the publication noted the Top 10

players in the Tulsa area. Bixby's Cord Nolan was ranked third, Carson Kirby was seventh and Braeden Presley was eighth. ... Bixby was ranked No. 1 in the World's Class 6A-I rankings followed by, in order, Owasso, Jenks, Union, Mustang, Broken Arrow, Norman, Norman North, Edmond Memorial and Edmond Santa Fe. ... Prior to the renewal of the BHS-OHS series in recent seasons, Owasso defeated the Spartans by identical 44-20 scores in 2010 at Bixby and 2011 at Owasso.