

Playmakers Shine in Bixby's 49-21 Battle of the Burbs Win

By Ron Holt

The stars were out and shining brightly during the QuikTrip Battle of the Burbs last Thursday night at the University of Tulsa's Skelly Field at H.A. Chapman Stadium.

Playmakers returning for Bixby's top-ranked Spartans made plays while numerous newcomers on both sides of the ball contributed to lifting BHS to a 49-21 victory over second-ranked Owasso in a rematch of last year's Class 6A-1 state championship thriller.

Bixby senior quarterback Carson Kirby, starting his third season opener, passed for 210 yards and three touchdowns while rushing four times for 28 yards and a TD; senior Owasso transfer Jaylen Moll rushed for 106 yards and one TD on 13 carries, and senior receiver Braeden Presley caught five passes for 125 yards and two TDs.

Defensively, junior linebacker Nathan Hobbs was credited with nine tackles, six pass deflections and one sack; senior linebacker Maverick Nance had eight tackles, seven unassisted, and senior nose guard Joe Peters had two tackles for loss while Emory Snyder, Cord Nolan, Trey McGlothlin, Hobbs and Dawson Madden each had one of the Spartans seven tackles for losses. And returning place kicker Bradley Thao boomed seven extra point kicks and sent several kickoffs into the end zone.

It was an impressive performance by the Spartans despite a shaky start.

Owasso came ready to play as the Rams went on an extended offensive drive starting the game. Behind talented quarterback Drew Frankenfield and a stable of speedy running backs and receivers, the Rams went on a 15-play drive from their own 20-yard line to Bixby's 18 before misfiring on a 35-yard field goal attempt.

Owasso converted four third-down plays with Frankenfield passing to Tah'Kari Bethel for 11, 22 and 12 yards for first downs while connecting with Carter Langenderfer for 14 yards and a first down.

The Rams, however, were victimized by three false start penalties and a clutch pass deflection by Presley forcing the field goal try.

"That was a lot of plays. I thought it was great to not give up any points. We preach all the time to not give up big plays ... for them to bow their neck and hold them to a field goal attempt was really good," Bixby's 16th-year head coach Loren Montgomery said afterward.

"And then we got the ball and started executing really well. I thought we did a good job of protecting. I thought we did a good job of getting the running backs a few creases and then Carson did a good job distributing the ball and scrambling when he had to."

Bixby responded with a lengthy drive, converting a third-and-four situation at its own 38-yard line when Kirby passed to Presley for 43 yards to the Rams' 19-yard line. On fourth-and-five, Kirby was pressured into scrambling before going airborne over a defender at the goal line for the TD. Thao's conversion kick gave BHS a 7-0 lead with 3:50 left in the first quarter.

Owasso went three-and-out on its next possession, thanks to pressure of Frankenfield and tackle for loss on back-to-back plays by Spartan senior linebacker Cord Nolan. It took Bixby two plays to score.

Sophomore B.J. Jones took a center snap and raced 26 yards to the Owasso 38 before Kirby and Presley connected for a 38-yard TD with Presley carrying a Ram defender into the end zone for a 14-0 lead with 1:23 left in the opening frame.

“They’re a good team and they went down the field at the start, but I felt really good when they (BHS defense) held them to no points because that’s how momentum starts,” Kirby said. “We got the ball back and we go down and score. We stopped them again ... and then we go score again. “I was pleased with the way we executed ... we always try to keep our tempo going. They’ve got a new DC from Deer Creek, and they were a little different but that wasn’t anything we hadn’t seen before ... we were prepared,” he added.

Bixby opened the second quarter with a 64-yard drive which ended in a five-yard TD run by Nolan and an extra point boot by Thao for a 21-0 lead with 9:56 left before halftime. A 27-yard pass from Kirby to senior Cetcher DeHart kickstarted the scoring drive.

After forcing another Ram punt, the Spartans needed only one play – a dazzling 49-yard TD run by Moll - to extend their lead to 28-0 with 8:30 left in the second quarter.

Owasso put together its first scoring drive later in the second stanza, capped off by a 19-yard touchdown pass from Frankenfield to senior Julius Wilson making it a 28-7 game with 5:06 showing.

Like OHS in the first half, Bixby put together a 16-play drive opening the second half with the Spartans converting four third-down plays to extend the drive. Kirby scrambled for gains of 10 and 13 yards converting two third-down plays,

The 78-yard drive ended on a two-yard TD run by junior backup wildcat quarterback Jack Gill on third down. Thao’s point-after kick gave BHS a 42-7 lead at 6:26 of the third quarter.

“I’ve been practicing that since spring practice,” said the 5-11, 200-pound Gill, who also plays linebacker. “Last year I was the lead blocker for Cooper (Parker). I loved doing both ... I was excited about scoring my first touchdown.

“Twenty-one points, that’s too many points to give up but it was a good start. We’ve got a lot to work on if we want the gold ball.”

A sack by Hobbs and a pass break up by Snyder forced another Ram punt with the Spartans taking possession at the Ram 43-yard line. Two plays later, Kirby passed to senior Nathan Gonzales, who displayed impressive vision maneuvering through would-be tacklers en route to a 36-yard TD and 42-7 Spartan lead with 2:14 left in the third stanza.

Two plays into the fourth quarter, Bixby ended its scoring barrage with a stunning 87-yard TD pass from Kirby to Presley, who was alone in the Ram secondary when making his second TD reception of the game.

Owasso ended the game with a couple of touchdowns with the final score coming against Spartan reserves as Bixby captured its third Battle of the Burbs hardware in four games and sixth win against the Rams in the past seven contests.

While pleased with the first game effort, Spartan coaches will have plenty to digest looking at film, like an erratic offensive finish to the first half.

“We fumbled the ball, missed some passes and had some personnel issues at the end of the first half ... we just got out of rhythm,” Montgomery said. “That was frustrating ... we’ve got some things to work on.

“I think we’ve got the ability to have a good team but it’s going to be really important for this team to take steps forward every week and work to get better ... and not read their own press clippings.”

NEXT GAME – Bixby travels to Sand Springs Friday (Sept. 5) for a battle with Class 6A-II’s top-ranked Sandites, starting at 7 p.m. at Memorial Stadium. The game will be broadcast by the Sports Animal with Shawn Tiemann handling play-by-play and Ethan Roe providing commentary.

Sand Springs, led by head coach Bobby Klinck, didn't have a Zero Week game but instead scrimmaged Class 5A power Carl Albert. The Sandites have several veterans returning, including an explosive offensive combination.

Quarterback Easton Webb, a 6-4, 205-pound senior, has reportedly passed for 6,027 yards and 60 touchdowns in his career. The two-sport star passed for around 3,500 yards and 41 TDs last season.

Wide receiver Dom Flores, a 6-2, 180-pound junior considered one of the state's best receivers, returns after catching 70 passes for 1,551 yards and 20 TDs last year while also running for five TDs.

"I saw they are ranked No. 1 in 6A-II. We know they are well coached, and they've got an excellent quarterback and one of the best receivers in the state in Forbes," Coach Montgomery said.

"We won't have a game tape to look at ... all we'll get from them is a scrimmage tape, so we'll go from there. They are always tough over there."

Sand Springs finished 8-4 in 2024 while also finishing at 6-1 in District 2 play. The Sandites defeated Piedmont (44-14) in the state quarterfinals before falling to eventual 6A-II state champion Choctaw (31-21) in the state semifinals.

Last season, Bixby raced to a 34-7 halftime lead en route to a 50-10 victory over Sand Springs at the Spartans' Lee Snider Field. The Spartans amassed 676 total yards of offense while limiting the Sandites to 222 total yards.

Webb passed for 147 yards and one TD last season while being intercepted twice. Forbes had four receptions for 46 yards.

Kirby had a productive outing in last year's game, passing for 422 yards and three TDs while rushing seven times for 50 yards and a TD. Senior Blake Hogshooter had seven receptions for 128 yards and two TDs while Tyler Wright had five grabs for 138 yards and one TD.

NOTABLES – Bixby has won 86 of its last 89 games. ... Bixby's defense was credited with 12 pass deflections against the Rams, led by Hobbs' six deflections and Wright's three. Spartan captains for the Rams' opener were Nolan, Presley, Kaeden Penny and Madden. ... Playing in front of an announced crowd of 20,000 at TU's H.A. Chapman Stadium was an exciting time, especially for first time players and veterans. "I was nervous, but excited," Spartan 6-1, 255-pound sophomore right tackle Gavin Wilson said afterward. "It was awesome ... I was so glad I was able to come out here and play. We were ready tonight, I thought we were ready to play." Senior Hector Garcia, a 5-10, 235-pound noseguard, added: "I was excited, and I was also a little sad since it's my last Battle of the Burbs. At the start, we were making some bad decisions that cost us. But we were glad to stop them, and they didn't score. That was good. I thought we played pretty well but there will be some things to fix." ... Bixby ended with 446 yards of total offense, averaging 19.1 yards per pass reception and 5.6 yards per rush. ... Week Zero scores from other future Bixby Opponents: Choctaw 44, Lubbock (Texas) Monterey 23; Jenks 51, Edmond Santa Fe 7; OC McGuinness 17, Deer Creek-Edmond 14, and Ponca City 65, Enid 6. Sand Springs, Edmond North, Mustang, Moore and Norman were idle.

SPARTAN 'D' – Bixby's defense limited Owasso to 381 total offensive yards with Ram quarterback Drew Frankenfield passing for 170- yards and two touchdowns on 16-of-33 passing while Jayden Hall rushed for 148 yards and one TD on 16 carries.

Hobbs led Bixby with nine total tackles, including five solo stops. Nance had eight tackles while Snyder was credited with seven tackles and one tackle for loss and Wright had six tackles.

“It’s just Bixby. We work hard in the summer, we work hard every day ... we work hard on physical toughness every day,” said Hobbs when asked about Owasso’s lengthy opening drive. “We were pretty happy we stopped them, but we worked all summer on conditioning ... so we were ready for a six-minute drive.

“That’s a lot of plays but that’s just all about mental toughness which is what coach Montgomery stresses all the time. It’s part of our core values. This game was really fun, it’s always fun against Owasso,” he added.

“He had a really good game. I don’t know how many passes he batted down but he had a big sack and several tackles ... he’s an excellent player who started for us last year as a sophomore,” Coach Montgomery said of Hobbs’ performance.

BIXBY 49, OWASSO 21

First Quarter

BHS – Carson Kirby 14 run (Bradley Thao kick), 3:50

BHS – Braeden Presley 38 pass from Kirby (Thao kick), 1:23

Second Quarter

BHS – Cord Nolan 5 run (Thao kick), 9:56

BHS – Jaylen Moll 49 run (Thao kick), 8:30

OHS – Julius Wilson 19 pass from Drew Frankenfield (Juan Razo kick), 5:06

Third Quarter

BHS – Jack Gill 2 run (Thao kick), 6:26

BHS – Nathan Gonzalez 36 pass from Kirby (Thao kick), 2:14

Fourth Quarter

BHS – Presley 87 pass from Kirby (Thao kick), 11:40

OHS – Tah’Kari Bethel 17 pass from Frankenfield (Razo kick)

OHS – Jayden Hall 74 run (Razo kick)