

Spartans Struggle, Dominate at Jenks, Hosting Moore

By Ron Holt

JENKS – The storyline after Bixby's top-ranked Spartans visited second-ranked Jenks last Friday night was a tale of two halves – one half to learn from and the other half to celebrate.

After giving up 35 first half points, Spartan defenders absorbed vocal halftime instructions, made needed adjustments and tossed a second-half shutout as Bixby rolled to a wild 66-35 victory over the talented Trojans in the battle of unbeaten teams witnessed by around 10,000 Allen Trimble Stadium fans.

The Spartans, ranked No. 20 nationally by MaxPreps, improved to 4-0 this season but, more importantly, opened Class 6A-District 1 play with a victory. Jenks dropped to 3-1 and 0-1. It was Bixby's fifth straight win over Jenks, matching the program's five-game win streak from 1955-59.

Big plays were the norm in the marathon first quarter as athletes from both teams erupted for long-distance touchdowns both on the ground and through the air. Busted assignments were also the norm in the first half. Giving up 35 points disappointed the Spartans with issues being addressed at halftime.

"The first half I thought we had a lot of mistakes, we needed to be on the same page. We realize winning is hard, it's never easy," said hard-nosed 6-1, 217-pound senior linebacker Maverick Nance, who was credited with a team-leading 10 tackles, six unassisted.

"The second half was a lot better ... our coaches yelling at us at halftime helped us and I thought we all played really well."

Rodney Flowers, Bixby's 14th-year defensive coordinator, admitted the volume was turned up during halftime conversations.

"We talked about doing our job. We were busting coverages, and they did a good job disguising and clouding things up on us. The big thing was to just take care of our business tonight and calm down. I didn't say it so nice but sometimes a good yelling at helps," Flowers said with a smile. "The response was great, the way we opened not so great."

On its opening possession, Jenks needed just six plays to take the early lead as junior quarterback Landon Kizzar passed to a wide-open senior KD Jones for a 41-yard touchdown. Owen Mahan's conversion kick gave the hosts a 7-0 lead with 9:58 left in the opening frame.

Bixby wasted little time answering as senior Jayson Moll, a swift 5-6, 165-pound running back, raced outside, avoided two Trojan tackle attempts before sprinting 44 yards for a TD. Jack Gill ran for the two-point conversion as Bixby led 8-7 at the 9:31 mark.

Jenks' junior Makalib Dillard made his presence known on the Trojans' next possession, catching an uncontested pass from Kizzar for an 82-yard TD and 14-8 Jenks' lead with 8:48 left in the stanza. A 53-yard TD pass from Kizzar to Braxton Daniel increased Jenks' advantage to 21-8 at the 3:19 mark.

Bixby's offense needed one play to respond – an 80-yard TD pass from senior quarterback Carson Kirby to senior wide receiver Braeden Presley. Bradley Thao's conversion kick trimmed the deficit to 21-15 at the 3:09 mark.

On Jenks' next possession, the Spartan defense forced losses of eight and three yards pushing the Trojans near their own end zone where Kizzar fumbled a snap and fell on the pigskin in the end zone resulting in a two-point Bixby safety, narrowing the hosts' lead to 21-17 with 1:43 left.

The lengthy quarter ended on a BHS turnover as a center snap hit Cord Nolan, who was in motion, on the leg and was recovered by the Trojans at Bixby's 47. Four plays into the second

quarter, Kizzar and Dillard combined for a 26-yard TD and 28-17 Trojan lead with 10:21 showing.

Bixby's offense then took control, scoring three times on, in order, an 18-yard TD pass from Kirby to Cetcher DeHart, a 70-yard TD burst by Moll and a 16-yard TD pass from Kirby to Emory Snyder as the Spartan took a 38-28 lead with 2:51 left before halftime.

Jenks capitalized on a Bixby personal foul penalty to start a final drive from Bixby's 37-yard line, a drive which ended on Jones' five-yard TD run, narrowing the gap to 38-35 with 14 seconds remaining until halftime.

Whatever message Bixby's coaches delivered at halftime it worked. The Spartan defense impressively silenced the explosive Trojan offense. The Spartans' multi-talented offense continued dominating until being replaced by reserves late in the game.

Bixby's offense opened the second half with a time-consuming drive - converting twice on third down and once on fourth down - before Kirby scrambled away from pressure before passing to DeHart, who caught the ball while tapping his toes inside the end zone line before falling out of bounds for a 10-yard TD. Thao's point-after kick made it a 45-35 game.

"I've always had faith in our team to do what's right. And our coaches do a great job of getting us prepared and getting us in the right mindset," said the 5-9, 159-pound senior DeHart, who ended with five catches for 41 yards and two touchdowns.

"I thought I had a good game ... I was locked in and did my job. It feels amazing, we've just got to keep going for the next game."

Bixby's 16th-year head coach Loren Montgomery said of DeHart: "Cetcher quietly has had some big catches in games this season. He's a great route-runner and is a smart route-runner ... he does a great job."

With 2:18 left in the third quarter, Bixby's lead grew to 52-35 after Kirby lofted an 11-yard TD pass to Connor Arant, a 6-3, 225-pound sophomore tight end.

A 41-yard pass reception by Presley ending the third quarter set up a 20-yard TD pass from Kirby to Snyder with 11:24 showing in the stanza. Thao's conversion kick gave BHS a 59-35 lead. It was the sixth touchdown pass of the game for Kirby, a steady, productive three-year starter.

"I was telling people all week I thought it was going to be an offensive battle," said Kirby, who was 20-of-24 passing for 266 yards and a career-high six TDs while also running four times for 43 yards. "Last year they had a good quarterback, but I think this one is better. They had a good line ... it was a good game for us.

"Games are going to happen like that and it's how you respond to it. I thought we played at a high level and I'm very proud of the guys. We probably should start off the game better. It's always good to start off with a win in the district," he added.

Bixby's scoring barrage ended on a four-yard touchdown run by 5-6, 165-pound senior running back Gabe Blankenship. Thao's final point-after kick gave BHS the 66-35 cushion.

"It was quite the game. I was happy with the way we settled in on defense the second half,"

Bixby's Coach Montgomery said afterward. "We did a lot better job covering and getting lined up and settled down in the second half.

"They did a good job with their scheme that got us a little discombobulated but I'm real proud of the way we moved the football and continued putting pressure on them. I thought we had some guys who played really well.

“Moll had an electric night. I thought his first touchdown run on the west sideline was a really big play. A lot of people don’t notice the tough yards ... we’re picking up four and five-yard gains and he had several of those.

“Carson knows what we do, and I thought he did a good job keeping his composure tonight and being patient and not trying to force anything. He runs our offense really well along with coach (offensive coordinator Tyler) Schneider ... those two guys have a real good relationship, and I thought both had a good game,” coach Montgomery added.

After being gashed in the first half, Bixby’s defense was outstanding in the final half, limiting the Trojans to around 20 yards of offense in the final two quarters.

Besides Nance’s 10 tackles, Bixby also received seven tackles by Snyder, senior Tyler Wright and junior Nathan Hobbs along with six tackles by senior linebacker Trey McGlothlin. Snyder had two tackles for loss as Bixby’s defense was credited with 10 tackles for loss.

“The response was great, the way we opened not so great,” coach Flowers said. “They came out and threw some wrinkles at us. It wasn’t just us busting things, it was their players doing their job. This will be a great film to watch.

“I love these kids. They’ll do anything you ask of them. We coaches ask a lot of them and they respond.”

Two-way standout Kaden Penny, a 6-3, 293-pound junior lineman, ended with three tackles, two solo stops, one tackle for a loss and his first sack of the season while also dominating in the offensive line.

“I didn’t know what was happening at first, but we made up for it in the second half and shut them out,” Penny said. “I knew we needed to score in this game, but I didn’t think it’d be like that. We got it fixed in the second half.”

Bixby’s stable of offensive playmakers was on display at Jenks, as it has been throughout the season,

Besides Kirby’s offensive production, Bixby received Moll’s 278 rushing yards and two TDs, Gill’s 55 rushing yards on seven carries and Presley’s four catches for 154 yards and one TD. Seven Spartan caught passes in the game.

“We’ve got guys who can play anywhere on the field, and we’ve got guys below those guys who can make plays,” Kirby said of Bixby’s numerous weapons. “I’m super proud of the guys. They stayed the course and kept their heads down.”

NEXT GAME – Bixby returns home Friday (Oct. 3) to host district rival Moore with kickoff set for 7 p.m. at Lee Snider Field.

Moore is 2-2 this season and off to a 0-1 Class 6AI, District 1 start after suffering a 36-35 home loss to Mustang last Friday.

In non-district play, all on the road, the Lions defeated Westmoore (38-13) and Southmoore (28-20) before falling to Norman North (61-24).

“They’ve got a good coach, they have been good in the past few years, they have a good program and good facilities,” coach Montgomery said of the Lions. “Cameron Bennett is their new coach, and he was at East Central at one time.”

Bennett spent the past seven seasons as an assistant coach at Norman North before accepting the Moore post.

Bixby amassed 485 total yards of offense in last year’s win at Moore while limiting Moore to 247 total yards. Presley rushed for one TD while passing for another TD to senior Blake Hogshooter, who ended with four receptions for 154 yards

Moore is led by quarterback Maverick Gardner, who has 568 yards passing and five TDs while rushing for 364 yards and three scores. Ozias Adams, a junior, is the rushing leader with 558 yards and two touchdowns. Junior Landis Greene has 19 receptions for 184 yards and two TDs, and Moore's top defender is junior Robert Nixon with 34 tackles.

This will be the fourth meeting between the two teams since Bixby moved to Class 6A-I. The Spartans rolled to a 49-7 win at Moore last year while also capturing a 68-5 home win in 2023 and a 64-5 road win in 2022. In three games, Bixby outscored the Lions 181 points to 19 points.

NOTEBOOK – Bixby has won 89 of its last 92 games and the Spartans are on a seven-game winning streak. Friday's win featured the most points scored at Jenks since the 2019 Spartans rolled to a 57-7 win. ...Spartan captains at Jenks were Nolan, Penny, Presley and Vincent Incremona. ... Early last week, Penny, who had several Division I offers, committed to the University of Oklahoma. "I was glad to commit ... it lifted some weight off my shoulder, for sure," Penny said. ... Bixby's special team also had a productive evening at Jenks. Presley had three kickoff returns for 50 yards and Nathan Gonzales had two kick returns for 40 yards. Senior kicker Thao was eight-for-eight on extra point attempts while booming six of nine kickoffs into the end zone for touchbacks. ... Through four games, Kirby has passed for 922 yards with 14 TDs and one interception. Moll has rushed for 495 yards and six TDs while Presley has 11 pass receptions for 299 yards and three scores. Defensively, Nance leads with 30 total tackles, including 21 solo stops. He's followed by Snyder (22), Hobbs (21), Wright (19), Nolan (15), McGlothlin (14) and Dawson Madden (13). Wright has a team-leading four pass interceptions.

OPPONENTS – Bixby's opponents schedule for this week: Jenks (3-1) at Norman (4-0), Edmond North (1-3) at Deer Creek (1-3), Enid (0-4) at Mustang (3-1), Union at Owasso (2-2), Sand Springs (2-2) at OC Capitol Hill and Choctaw (2-2) at Putnam City. Last week's results included: Edmond Deer Creek 65, Enid 0; Norman 35, Edmond North 25; Mustang 36, Moore 35; Owasso 28, Broken Arrow 14; Sand Springs 51, Bartlesville 0, and Choctaw 40, Piedmont 29.

Bixby 66, Jenks 35

FIRST QUARTER

JHS – KD Jones 44 pass from Landon Kizzar (Owen Mahan kick)

BHS – Jayson Moll 44 run (Jack Gill run)

JHS – Kailib Dillard 82 pass from Kizzar (Mahan kick)

JHS – Jake Daniel 53 pass from Kizzar (Mahan kick)

BHS – Braeden Presley 80 pass from Carson Kirby (Bradley Thao kick)

BHS – Bixby safety as Kizzar recovers fumble in end zone

SECOND QUARTER

JHS – Dillard 26 pass from Kizzar (Mahan kick)

BHS – Cetcher DeHart 21 pass from Kirby (Thao kick)

BHS – Moll 70 run (Thao kick)

BHS – Emory Snyder 10 pass from Kirby (Thao kick)

JHS – Jones 5 run (Mahan kick)

THIRD QUARTER

BHS – DeHart 10 pass from Kirby (Thao kick)

BHS – Connor Arant 11 pass from Kirby (Thao kick)

FOURTH QUARTER

BHS – Snyder 20 pass from Kirby (Thao kick)

BHS – Gabe Blankenship 4 run (Thao kick)