

## **Bixby Stuns Choctaw 57-7, Opens District at Jenks Friday**

**By Ron Holt**

It didn't take long to realize that last Friday's home opener against the Choctaw Yellowjackets would become a special memory for Bixby's talented senior wide receiver-cornerback Nathan Gonzales.

Gonzales returned the opening kickoff 70 yards for a stunning touchdown and also caught a pair of first quarter TD passes from senior quarterback Carson Kirby in sparking the top-ranked Spartans to a 57-7 victory over Choctaw, Class 6A-II's defending state champion.

In front of a large Military Appreciation Night at Lee Snider Field at Spartan Stadium, Bixby improved to 3-0 on the season while Choctaw, which played all three non-district games on the road, fell to 1-2.

The season kicks into high gear this week with the start of Class 6A-I, District 1 play as the Spartans travel to Jenks for a battle of unbeatens, starting at 7 p.m. Friday at Allen Trimble Stadium on the JHS campus.

Choctaw elected to kick off to start the game and, as Bixby expected, the Yellowjackets kicked the ball short toward the Spartan sideline. Gonzales sprinted to catch the ball, followed a couple of teammate blocks before breaking away for the touchdown with 11:48 showing in the first quarter.

A two-point conversion pass by Bixby holder Tyler Wright misfired but the Spartans led 6-0 after capturing the early momentum.

"I knew if I took it full speed I'd find a hole," said the 5-8, 160-pound Gonzales. "I hit the hole, saw green grass and celebrated with the boys in the end zone. That was a big play, but we practice every day and hard work pays off."

Trevor Suffal, Bixby's special team's coordinator, was also pleased when a plan comes together. "We kinda knew they were going to kick a bit shorter, so we were prepared for it. Gonzales is dangerous when he has the ball in his hands. And Jack Gill made a huge block on the kick return. Those guys up front stayed connected with their blocks to free him up."

After the Bixby defense forced a punt which was returned 24 yards by senior Braeden Presley giving the Spartans' field position at Choctaw's 28.

A 27-yard pass from senior quarterback Carson Kirby to senior receiver Emory Snyder gave BHS possession at the visitors' three where senior running back Jayson Moll scored on the next play. A conversion run by Gill gave Bixby a 14-0 lead with 9:14 left in the marathon first quarter. On Bixby's next possession a holding call nullified a 35-yard TD pass from Kirby to Presley but two plays later, Kirby connected with Gonzales for a 40-yard TD pass. A conversion kick by senior Bradley Thao gave BHS a 21-0 lead with 5:03 showing in the opening quarter.

Bixby's aggressive defense and Choctaw penalties forced the third Yellowjacket punt as BHS took over at the CHS 45. Three plays later, Kirby hit senior Cetcher DeHart for a 12-yard TD. Senior Cord Nolan caught a two-point conversion pass from Kirby, expanding the Spartan score to 29-0 with 1:47 remaining in the first quarter.

Bixby wasn't finished. On its next possession, Kirby and Gonzales teamed up again, this time for a 42-yard TD pass. Thao's conversion kick gave BHS a 36-0 lead with 21 seconds showing in the stanza.

"Carson and I meshed together tonight ... he's a really good quarterback," added Gonzales, who had four pass receptions for 96 yards and two TDs along with his 70-yard kickoff TD sprint.

"I'm super thrilled for him," coach Montgomery said of Gonzales. "He's been great all summer long ... he was uncoverable. He is playing well at corner, too. I congratulated him in the locker room at halftime, and he said 'coach, this is so much fun.'

Bixby kept applying pressure in the second quarter as a 27-yard TD pass from Kirby to Nolan gave the hosts a 43-0 lead before Choctaw scored its only points on a 16-yard pass from quarterback Landon Gatson to tight end Titus Hawk.

The Spartans wrapped up a 50-7 first half lead when Moll bolted up the middle for a 65-yard TD run with 18 seconds left. Thao added the conversion.

"It's still a challenge, learning all the new plays and stuff but I'm just taking it week by week. I'm getting adjusted," Moll, the transfer from Owasso, said of learning the Spartan system.

"Practice was very up-tempo this week. They're a good team but we were ready for them."

The second half featured a continuously running game clock as reserves from both teams finished out the game. Bixby ended the scoring as sophomore quarterback Reece Madden rifled a pass to speedy senior Corey Foreman for a 65-yard touchdown and Thao kicked the conversion.

"We played hard, we played physical ... and we executed some things well at times. But we had some mistakes and some personnel issues which we've got to clean up," coach Montgomery said. "The kids, I thought, executed well and played well. We had a couple of calls for holding we've got to clean up.

"It was good. We came out healthy and we executed some things at a high level, and we came out with a 'W' which was all we couple hope for."

While the Spartans were pleased with the strong start, they understand that the challenges become magnified with the start of district play and there's still room for improvement.

"We jumped on them quick and that helped us out the whole game, it was good for our momentum for sure," said the 6-2, 202-pound Snyder, who ended with two receptions for 45 yards. "This was probably our best week of practice ... we had good practices every day of the week.

"We come in every game trying to dominate from the start, but the scoreboard doesn't show all of our mistakes or busts we had so we've got things to work on,"

**NEXT GAME** – The longtime rivalry between Bixby and Jenks is also a crucial Class 6A-1 District 1 opener for both teams.

Both teams are 3-0 entering the state's Game of the Week and are ranked first and second, respectively, in Class 6A-1 state rankings.

Last season, Bixby captured a 21-7 home win over the Trojans as the Spartans overcame an early 7-0 second quarter deficit in the turnover-free game by scoring 21 points.

Senior Cooper Parker scored on touchdown runs of 18 yards and one yard in the win while junior quarterback Carson Kirby finished with 124 yards passing and 78 rushing yards, including an eight-yard TD scamper, to pace Bixby's offense.

Defensively, Bixby was led by Braeden Presley, Cord Nolan, Trey McGlothlin and Parker with five tackles each while Nolan and McGlothlin were credited with sacks.

Jenks' touchdown came as quarterback Owen Jones scrambled before tossing an eight-yard touchdown pass to tight end Jack McNelly.

This season, Jenks, under first-year head coach Adam Gaylor, won at Edmond Santa Fe (51-7), rallied to win at Owasso (31-21) and rolled at home over Tulsa Union (48-30) in the Backyard Bowl battle. The Trojans were idle last week.

The Trojans feature talented, athletic players on both sides of the ball, led by senior running back KD Jones, who is an Oklahoma State commitment. Jones rushed for 208 yards and five

touchdowns while junior quarterback Landon Kizzar passed for 248 yards and three TDs in a 51-7 season-opening win at Edmond Santa Fe.

Jenks rallied from a 14-point deficit at Jenks en route to a 31-21 win at Owasso. Jones rushed for 160 yards and three TDs in the win over Union and Kizzar passed for 287 yards and four TDs while junior receiver Kailib Dillard caught five passes for 168 yards and two TDs.

"I watched a live stream a little of the Backyard Bowl. They are super talented," Spartan coach Montgomery said of the Trojans. "They have the best running back in the state, have talented receivers and the quarterback is doing really well.

"They are well coached. Anytime you play against a coach Gaylor team they'll throw some things at you ... they'll be prepared," he added.

Bixby won the last three battles in the series and six of the last seven contests. Since head coach Loren Montgomery arrived at Bixby (2010-2024), the Spartans are 8-9 in games with Jenks. Since 2014, when Bixby started its state championship winning streak, the Spartans are 8-5 versus the Trojans.

Jenks' last win in the series came in the 38-35 win at Bixby in the 2022 regular season finale.

BHS avenged the loss with a 28-14 state semifinal win at Broken Arrow.

"Jenks is undefeated this season, so we've got to really prepare this week ... we can't take any days off," said Gonzales. "I feel we'll have the best week of practice since we're playing a really good team."

**BIXBY 'D'** – Despite playing one half, several Spartan defenders made their presence known with a strong first half effort against Choctaw.

Senior Maverick Nance finished with six total tackles, five unassisted, to pace the Spartans while senior Dawson Madden had four tackles, three unassisted, three tackles for loss and the only sack. Senior Trey McGlothlin, senior Vincent Incremona and junior Cole Seager were credited with four tackles each. McGlothlin also had two quarterback hurries.

"The whole atmosphere was great tonight. We took advantage and were doing our job and being physical," the 6-1, 243-pound Dawson said. "We know they were a good team, and we never overlook any team ... we always come out to win and dominate.

"I was pleased to finally get a sack. We're just looking to keep this momentum going into the Jenks game next week against a good team," he added.

Bixby's Nolan is playing a different position defensively while also figuring prominently again in Bixby's offensive plans.

"I'm playing mike (linebacker) this year which is a little different ... I played weakside last year. It's not that big of an adjustment," said Nolan, who had three catches for 30 yards and one touchdown along with two tackles.

"They (Choctaw) did a few things different but for the most part they did what we expected. We've just got to get better with some things and make sure things are running smoothly. We need to get those things cleaned up, going against a good team next week. Next week is when it matters."

**SPECIALISTS** – Bixby returns senior kicker Bradley Thao, who came to football from the soccer field last year and made impressive improvement throughout the season. And Gonzales returns as the punter. But the Spartans have new faces at other special team positions.

"Tyler Wright is the holder, and Jake Nielsen is the short snapper while on punts we've had Cord Nolan. When you have good specialists, it makes special teams even better. We've got guys who bought in to everything we do, they want to do their job and do things the right way," said coach Suffal.

“Bradley came over from soccer last year and that’s a different technique. Once he got it figured out, now he’s fine tuning it and he’s made incredible progress. You have a guy who can put it in the end zone like that and kick extra points ... he’s reliable,” he added.

Through three games, Thao is 12-of-12 kicking extra points and has yet to attempt a field goal. He’s credited with 25 kickoffs with 18 resulting in touchbacks. On seven punts, Gonzales has a 31.4 yards per punt average.

**NOTEBOOK** – Bixby is ranked No. 25 in MaxPreps recent national rankings. Jenks was ranked No. 164. ... Bixby has won 88 of its last 91 games and is currently on a six-game winning streak. ... BHS captains for the Choctaw game were Nolan, Presley, Kaden Penny and Sam DeWoody. ... The first quarter last Friday lasted around 48 minutes. ... Against Choctaw, Kirby passed for 200 yards on 13-of-15 passing while throwing four touchdown passes. Madden was two-for-two passing for 65 yards and one TD. Moll was the rushing leader with 96 yards and two TDs on five rushes. ... Through three games, Kirby has passed for 656 yards and eight TDs while being intercepted once. Moll has 217 yards rushing and four TDs. Behind Gonzales’ 10 receptions for 170 yards and three TDs are Presley with seven catches for 145 yards and two TDs, and Snyder with four grabs for 75 yards. ... Results from games last week involving Bixby opponents included: Sand Springs (1-2) 35, Bishop Kelley 0; Norman North 61, Moore (2-1) 24; Mustang (2-1) 62, Westmoore 13, and Norman (3-0) 37, Piedmont 7. Owasso (1-2), Edmond North (1-2), Deer Creek (0-3) and Enid (0-3) were idle.

**MANAGERS** – Also providing critical behind-the-scenes contributions to Bixby’s football program again this season are the hard-working managers.

“I’ve got a diverse group that go from sophomores to seniors, and I’ve got five or six girls returning from previous years,” said Spartan offensive line coach Corbin Burchett, who directs the managers. “That’s awesome because they know what to do.

“These girls are out here every practice. They film every practice and every game. We get so much good from the film ... it’s a massive teaching tool. A lot of people undervalue what they do for this team. If we didn’t have those people out here donating their time, we wouldn’t be as good as we are.

“They know how everything operates so it’s awesome having girls who have been here before ... if something happens several of them know the quick fixes. On game days, coach (Terry) Quigley helps out a lot,” he added.

BHS managers include Abby Dupuis, Juliana Salas, Bria Shepler, Addison Rowe, Brooklyn Callahan, Karlyn Crisp, Nora Grellner, Sofia Rojas and Kealeigh Crow.

### **Bixby 57, Choctaw 7**

#### **FIRST QUARTER**

BHS – Nathan Gonzales 70 kickoff return (pass failed)

BHS – Jayson Moll 1 run (Jack Gill run)

BHS – Gonzales 40 pass from Carson Kirby (Bradley Thao kick)

BHS – Cetcher DeHart 12 pass from Kirby (Cord Nolan pass from Kirby)

BHS – Gonzales 42 pass from Kirby (Thao kick)

#### **SECOND QUARTER**

BHS – Nolan 27 pass from Kirby (Thao kick)

CHS – Titus Hawk 16 pass from Landon Gadson (Gambill kick)

BHS – Moll 65 run (Thao kick)

#### **FOURTH QUARTER**

BHS – Corey Foreman 65 pass from Reece Madden (Thao kick)