

Bixby Overcomes Mustang, Hosts Antlers on Senior Night

By Ron Holt

MUSTANG – When Bixby High senior running back Jayson Moll gets his hands on the ball, his combination of speed and elusiveness is on display. So, was Moll's strength and toughness here last Thursday night at Mustang's Bronco Stadium.

Behind Moll's 311 yards rushing and one touchdown, Bixby overcame a lightning delay of almost two hours, miscues in the passing game, costly penalties and the talented Broncos in capturing a hard-fought 38-22 victory in Class 6A-1 District 1.

The game was originally scheduled for Friday but was moved up a day because of weather concerns. Weather still impacted the game while both teams were warming up as lighting in the area forced a retreat to the locker room. The scheduled 7 p.m. game started at 8:47 p.m. and ended around midnight.

It was Bixby's first weather delay since the Spartans Class 6A-II state championship game against Stillwater in Owasso in 2018. That game was interrupted midway through and didn't finish until the early morning hours.

"We just hung out. We told the kids to take their pads off, get off their feet and drink some water," Spartan head coach Loren Montgomery said. "Us coaches had been through it in 2018, but the kids hadn't ... the kids had come out and warmed up then we had to go in."

Unbeaten and top-ranked Bixby (8-0) returns home for the final regular season home game Friday (Oct. 31) when the Edmond Deer Creek Antlers visit Lee Snider Stadium. BHS will honor senior football players and their parents prior to kickoff, which is set for 7 p.m.

Mustang's defense, featuring an athletic secondary, was designed to cause problems in the Spartans' passing game. It did but the running game picked up the slack. Bixby backs combined for 471 yards on 60 rushing attempts and three touchdowns.

Bixby got off to a productive start, taking the opening kickoff and picking up a couple of first downs on a 13-yard run by junior Jack Gill and a 26-yard pass play from senior quarterback Carson Kirby to senior Braeden Presley.

But a backward Spartan pass which went out of bounds for a seven-yard loss and a couple of pass plays which failed to connect ended the drive, giving Mustang (5-3, 3-2) the ball at its own 35-yard line.

The Broncos' opening drive was highlighted by a 61-yard pass from senior quarterback Jaden O'Neal to Gabriel Osborne to the Spartan six-yard line. Two plays later, O'Neal passed to Ryder Murphy for a six-yard TD. The conversion run failed as MHS lead 6-0 with 9:09 left in the first quarter.

On its next possession, Bixby overcame a couple of penalties while driving to the Mustang eight-yard line where the drive stalled. Senior Bradley Thao kicked a 25-yard field goal to trim the Broncos' lead to 6-3 at the 5:08 mark.

A pass interception ended Bixby's next drive while an intentional grounding penalty on O'Neal, who was pressured by Spartan senior linebacker Cord Nolan, eventually forced a Mustang punt. The Spartans wasted little time taking their first lead as the next drive featured a 64-yard sprint down the sideline by Moll to Mustang's 12-yard line. Three plays later, Gill ran four yards for a TD while he also ran for the two-point conversion as the Spartans led 11-6 with 5:56 left in the second quarter.

With 2:51 showing in the second quarter, Mustang regained the lead on a 70-yard touchdown pass from O'Neal to Jayden Johnson. A two-point conversion pass failed leaving MHS holding a 12-11 lead.

Rushing gains of 10 and 20 yards by Moll and 23 yards by Gabe Blankenship sparked Bixby's next drive, which advanced to Mustang's 12-yard line.

An apparent Spartan TD pass from Kirby to Nolan was called back because of an ineligible receiver downfield as BHS settled for a 30-yard field goal by Thao with 47 seconds left in the first half giving Bixby a 14-12 lead at intermission.

Both teams struggled in the third quarter with Mustang misfiring on a 40-yard field goal attempt by Harrison Daniels. Later in the period, however, both teams put together scoring drives.

Bixby traveled 61 yards in seven plays with Kirby passing to sophomore Connor Arant for a 15-yard TD. Arant got the best of a Bronco defender during a violent collision at the goal line.

Thao kicked the conversion as Bixby led 21-12 with 3:50 left in the third frame.

Mustang answered with a lengthy drive, ending in a 14-yard TD burst by Jayden Reyes and extra point kick by Daniels, narrowing the deficit to 21-19 with 1:28 left in the third quarter.

Bixby seemed more settled on its next drive, maneuvering 65 yards in 11 plays, ending with a five-yard TD burst by Moll. Thao's conversion kick gave Bixby a 28-19 lead with 10:16 left in the period.

Moll had a busy, successful night as he rushed the ball 30 times for 311 yards while catching three passes for 17 yards. He admits he expected a busy night.

"Yea, that was the game plan," Moll said of anticipating more touches in the running game. "I do get tired, but you've just got to keep going. It feels pretty good. We started off slow but then we talked among ourselves at halftime and just played our brand of football."

Did the weather delay impact the game? "Not really, we just had to lock in and play our own brand of football. I'm not a frustrating type of person ... I just go out there and play. I'm just playing my own game," added Moll, who has rushed for 914 yards on 87 carries while averaging 10.5 yards per carry this season."

Mustang's next possession ended in a 44-yard field goal by Daniels, trimming Bixby's advantage to 28-22 with 8:42 showing in the game.

Bixby's next drive stalled at the Spartan 32-yard line as BHS faced a punt on fourth-and-four. Senior receiver/defensive back/punter Nathan Gonzales took the snap, ran to his right before impressively reversing the field while scampering 31 yards for a Spartan first down at Mustang's 37-yard line.

Sparked by Gonzales' second successful fake punt run this season Bixby drove to Mustang's two-yard line following a 30-yard pass from Kirby to senior Emory Snyder. Snyder made a leaping catch while being covered on the play.

BHS only picked up one yard in three plays before Thao kicked a 20-yard field goal for a 31-22 Spartan cushion with 4:24 showing in the contest

The Spartans weren't finished. After the BHS defense stiffened, stopping Mustang on downs, the Spartans ended the scoring with a final second TD run of one yard by Gill. Thao's conversion kick gave the visitors the 38-22 win.

It was a night of missed opportunities by the Spartans, especially in the red zone. But there were enough key plays down the stretch to allow Bixby to pull away for the victory.

“We weren’t throwing the ball real well, then we had the backwards pass, and we turned the ball over and then we had the penalties ... that’s hard to overcome getting the behind the chains,” coach Montgomery said.

“The kids fought and played with great effort. We didn’t make some plays that we normally make but down the stretch we made some good plays ... that’s how it goes.”

Bixby ended with 610 yards of total offense – 471 rushing and 139 passing. Kirby completed 14-of-24 passes while passing for one touchdown and being intercepted once. It was only his second interception through eight games.

Besides Moll’s 311 rushing yards, Gill rushed 19 times for 92 yards and two TDs. Blankenship and Kirby each ran for 34 yards. Snyder had two pass receptions for 47 yards to pace the receivers.

“We came in knowing how strong our run game is because we can pound the rock,” said Spartan 6-1, 302-pound senior center Asher Jolly. “We knew they had a good pass defense and knew they had a good secondary, but we just stuck to the game plan.

“During the delay we just stayed locked in ... we weren’t messing around. We knew we had a battle on our hands,” said Jolly, who is starting for the first time this season.

He enjoys improving alongside the other linemen and is proud of the way they’ve meshed during the season. “I love it. We have a very good chemistry, we hang out together ... we’re all buddies,” Jolly added.

Senior linebackers Nolan and Trey McGlothlin paced the Spartans’ defensive effort with eight total tackles each. Nolan had three tackles for loss and McGlothlin one as each were credited with a sack.

Presley had seven total tackles, including six solo stops, while junior linebacker Ben Puckett was credited with seven tackles. Senior Dawson Madden had three solo tackles, all three tackles for losses.

NEXT GAME – Bixby hosts a Deer Creek team which has won three of its last five games, including last Thursday’s 30-28 win over visiting Norman. The Antlers of head coach Wade Standley are 3-5 this season with a 3-2 district record.

The game will be broadcast by The Sports Animal, FM97.1, with play-by-play announcer Shawn Tiemann and color analyst Ethan Roe. The pregame show starts at 6:30 p.m.

This season Deer Creek lost to McGuinness (17-14), Edmond Memorial (35-7), lost at Norman North (27-14), won at Enid (65-0), defeated Edmond North (13-12), lost at Moore (40-24) and lost against Jenks (56-21) prior to the Norman game.

The Antlers are led offensively by 6-6, 220-pound sophomore quarterback Dax Chancey, who has 1,178 passing yards, 10 TDs and four interceptions. Lemar Davis, a 5-9, 160-pound senior, is the leading rusher with 493 yards and one TD while senior Alex Nkepang has 201 rushing yards and seven TDs.

Junior Gage Gibbons has 45 pass receptions for 408 yards and four TDs while senior Jalen Davis has 31 grabs for 406 yards and two scores.

In 2024, Bixby won 48-10 at Deer Creek, scoring 27 second quarter points en route to a 34-3 halftime lead. The Spartans ended with 475 total yards while holding the Antlers to 193 total yards. Kirby passed for 273 yards and four TDs.

NOTABLES – With the win at Mustang, Bixby has won 93 of its last 96 games and is on an 11-game winning streak. ... Bixby’s team buses arrived at the school around 2 a.m. Friday ... Bixby senior kicker Bradley Thao kicked three field goals in four attempts at Mustang while also going 3-for-3 on extra-point kicks. He missed a 40-yard field goal in the second quarter. This season,

Thao is 40-of-40 on extra-point kicks and three-for-four on field goal attempts. In two seasons as the starting kicker, Thao has kicked six field goals in eight attempts, ... This season, Kirby has passed for 1,744 yards and 25 touchdowns while Moll has rushed for 914 yards on 87 carries and scored 11 TDs. Gill has 270 rushing yards and six TDs. Defensively, Bixby is led by senior linebacker Maverick Nance, who has 41 total tackles while playing only seven games. Nolan has 40 total tackles while senior Dawson Madden is credited with 16 tackles for loss and four sacks. Senior Tyler Wright leads in pass interceptions with five. ... Mustang quarterback Jaden O'Neal, a Florida State commitment, passed for 310 yards and two touchdowns against Bixby while senior Judson Gilliland rushed for 78 yards on 14 attempts. Ryder Murphy had nine pass receptions for 125 yards and one TD to pace the Broncos. ... Defensive leaders for Mustang were senior Evenson Malaska with 20 tackles, 13 unassisted, while senior Tayten Duncan was credited with 20 total tackles. ... This was Bixby's third straight Thursday night game. ... Captains at Mustang were Cord Nolan, Braeden Presley, Kaden Penny and Nathan Gonzales. ... There will be two familiar faces on Deer Creek's sideline Friday. The Antlers' offensive coordinator is Austin Emory, who spent 11 seasons as a Bixby assistant coach while Deer Creek receivers' coach is Micah Haggerty, who spent the past two seasons as a Spartan assistant coach. **DISTRICT RACE** – In other Class 6A-1 District 1 scores from last week: Jenks 67, Moore 14, and Edmond North 51, Enid 3. District games this Friday include Mustang (5-3, 3-2) at Norman (6-2, 3-2), Jenks (7-1, 4-1) at Enid (0-8, 0-5), and Edmond North (2-6, 1-4) at Moore (3-5, 1-4). Scores from games involving Bixby's non-league opponents last week included: Owasso 42, Edmond Santa Fe 8; Sand Springs 49, Muskogee 28, and Choctaw 42, U. S. Grant 0.

BIXBY 38, MUSTANG 2

First Quarter

MHS – Ryder Murphy 6 pass from Jaden O'Neal (run failed)

BHS – Bradley Thao 25 field goal

Second Quarter

BHS – Jack Gill 4 run (Gill run)

MHS Jayden Johnson 70 pass from O'Neal (pass failed)

BHS – Thao 32 field goal

Third Quarter

BHS – Connor Arant 15 pass from Carson Kirby (Thao kick)

MHS – Jayden Reyes 14 run (Harrison Daniels kick)

Fourth Quarter

BHS – Jayson Moll 5 run (Thao kick)

MHS – Daniels 44 field goal

BHS – Thao 20 field goal

BHS – Gill 1 run (Thao kick)