

Spartans Enter Preseason Practice on Positive Notes

By Ron Holt

Ending an important summer of work and improvement on positive notes, Bixby's Spartan footballers started preseason practices on Monday (Aug. 3) on the Lee Snider Stadium turf.

Following Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association's regulations, Bixby practices in shorts, shoulder pads and helmets Monday through Wednesday. From Monday through Friday, Aug. 10-14, the Spartans will practice in full pads leading up to an intrasquad scrimmage starting at 9 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 15.

Bixby's junior varsity and ninth grade will host the JV Fall Classic on Thursday, Aug. 20, before Bixby's Fall Classic on Friday, Aug. 21, when the Spartan varsity competes with Sand Springs, Deer Creek and Shiloh Christian from Springdale, Arkansas.

This has been a crucial summer for the Spartans, who suffered heavy graduation losses. While sending the squad through daily strength and conditioning workouts, 17th-year head coach Loren Montgomery and staff were busy evaluating prospects, positioning those prospects and figuring out a possible team identity.

"We've been here before but we're going to have to have guys step up ... we have to grow,"

Montgomery said. "We've got some guys who've played a ton of football but maybe weren't starters.

We'll just have to figure it out on the run.

"I think our kids will be tough, but we have some question marks and our schedule isn't very forgiving," he added.

Bixby competed in a passing league and in a couple of 7-on-7 tournaments during the summer and capped off months of strenuous workouts with the annual Night of Champions on July 15, which by all accounts was a success.

It's been a summer long process. Pieces to the 2026 puzzle continue falling into place and will likely continue up to the season opener at Owasso on Friday, August 28.

"We went from being really frustrated to having more hope about how this group is going to come together," coach Montgomery said. "Each week when we're doing the 7-on-7 stuff we've had a lot of guys stepping up, slowly but surely."

The Night of Champions produced impressive results. There were 58 Spartans who reached the coveted 225-pound mark while five lifted 300 pounds or above and 64 Spartans recorded personal best lifts.

"Our guys are incredible ... they work extremely hard and are super attentive to doing everything you ask of them," said first-year Head Strength and Conditioning Coach Drake Gammon, who was an assistant on Bixby's strength and conditioning staff last season.

"I thought this far into the summer that we've made great progress. I thought our guys looked very good.

"It's been good, it's been an incredibly exciting opportunity," said Coach Gammon, who played college football at Pittsburg State in Kansas. "I'm getting to know the guys better as we keep pushing them going into my second year. It's been great."

Even with a change in the strength and conditioning leadership, the results remain productive.

"Our top end guys are really strong. We had quite a few guys lift 300 pounds," coach Montgomery said of the Night of Champions. "You saw the excitement with the guys getting 225 for the first time which is cool. We're just trying to create positive moments.

"We've worked their tails off all summer, and this is a good opportunity to show their progress. I think all the kids like it,"

During the Skordle 7-on-7 event, which Bixby hosted earlier this summer, the Spartans struggled but progress was evident in the Southwest Elite 7-on-7 Showcase, hosted by Shiloh Christian in Springdale, Arkansas, in mid-July.

Clutch plays lifted the Spartans to an 18-17 win over Owasso in the Southwest Elite championship game. Stillwater defeated Lincoln Christian, 18-11, in the third-place game and Shiloh Christian defeated Heritage Hall, 31-12, in the fifth-place game.

“Winning in Springdale was cool. Everybody says 7-on-7 isn’t football and it’s not, but the kids had to make plays under pressure. They had to make throws and kids had to make catches,’ Montgomery noted. “In our championship game it came down to us having to complete a pass for a first down on third down and we win. If we don’t, we lose. Having guys make plays like that and having other positive moments are key.

“We used three quarterbacks over there, they rotated series but if they went down and scored, they got another series,” Montgomery added. “All three have things they’re good at and all three played pretty good.”

The three quarterbacks are 6-1, 210-pound junior Iasiah Butcher IV, who moved in from Jenks; junior returnee Reece Madden and 6-2 senior Preston Carter, a move-in from Broken Arrow.

BIXBY NOTEBOOK – In recent weeks, the Daily Oklahoman newspaper presented its Super 30 high school football players in the state. Bixby senior offensive lineman Kaden Penny was the No. 2 selection. Penny is committed to the University of Oklahoma. The newspaper’s No. 1 selection was Mustang defensive back Gabriel Osborne, also an OU commitment. ... Three teams – Bixby, Sand Springs and Shiloh Christian – competing in Bixby’s Fall Classic scrimmage were 2025 state champions. ... Spartan defensive coordinator Rodney Flowers was named President of the Oklahoma Football Coaches Association recently while SHS assistant Jack Meservy was honored by the OFBCA as a 35-under 35, which recognizes future coaching leaders. Flowers also spoke about defensive play during the recent Oklahoma Coaches Association’s clinic in Edmond. ... Recently, MaxPreps noted the “Best football team in every state” with Bixby being the Oklahoma representative after eight straight state championships and 11 state titles in the past 12 years.