

Talented Owasso Hosting Bixby in Season Opener Friday

By Ron Holt

Despite penalties and miscues - expected from a squad featuring numerous inexperienced players – Bixby's Spartans regrouped down the stretch in capturing a 24-7 victory over visiting Sand Springs in a two-quarter preseason scrimmage last Friday night at Lee Snider Stadium.

The Spartans, facing competitive battles for starting spots at key positions offensively and defensively, are far from a finished product but the preseason is over.

As 17th-year Bixby head coach Loren Montgomery stated following the scrimmage: "It's for real, now."

Challenges await the defending Class 6A-I state champion Spartans in non-district battles this season, beginning with the season opener Friday (Aug. 28) at defending 6A-I state runner-up Owasso. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m. at Owasso Stadium.

There will be a sense of urgency for improvement in all phases for the Spartans to be ready for the challenges ahead. Last Friday's scrimmage film will assist in making needed corrections.

"I just thought we were sloppy," Coach Montgomery said after the scrimmage. "The little things we're going to have to do to win we weren't able to do very well tonight. We have a lot of guys who haven't been out there ... they all have to get better.

"We've got a long way to go to see what our identity might be. If we're going to have a good football team we're going to have to do the little things right and win in the margins. We can't have alignment penalties where we're covering people up, we're going to have to catch the easy stuff and we can't have the holding penalties which put us behind.

"I think we've got talented guys out here ... we've just got to figure out what we're good at and build a format and a system," he added.

Bixby's defense, led by a trio of veteran linebackers – Nathan Hobbs, Ben Puckett and Cain Brackney – overcame a couple of long passes to Sand Springs' veteran standout wide receiver Dom Forbes in the first quarter by posting a shutout in the second quarter.

Hobbs gave the Spartans the early momentum as he alertly intercepted Sand Springs' 6-4, 188-pound senior quarterback Cash Koetner, a move-in from Norman, and returned the theft to the Sandites' 27-yard line.

Brackney rushed three yards for the Spartans' first touchdown on fourth-and-three with 4:57 showing the first stanza. Senior Lincoln Aragona kicked the extra point for a 7-0 lead.

Sand Springs, defending Class 6A-II state champion, battled back as Koetner hit Forbes with a lengthy pass inside Bixby's five-yard line. Sand Springs scored on Koetner's six-yard TD pass and a conversion kick tied the game at 7-all with 1:48 left.

In the second quarter, Bixby took control with a 25-yard field goal by Aragona, a 16-yard TD dash by senior running back Tylan Montgomery and a long TD pass from senior quarterback Preston Carter to sophomore wide receiver Hilkayah Sampson with 53 seconds showing in the scrimmage.

With the loss of three-year starting quarterback Carson Kirby to graduation, Bixby has a trio of signal callers competing for the starting nod in 2026. Senior Carter and juniors Isaiah Butcher IV and Reece Madden took snaps in the scrimmage.

"I thought they all did good tonight. The message I gave them was that we were good but not great," said Bixby's creative offensive coordinator Tyler Schneider. "We've got room to improve and that's basically the same with the total offense.

“I think a lot of it was a lack of experience. They’re moving in the right direction but we’re not there yet, obviously, as an offense or at quarterback. We have a lot of competition at every position on offense outside of those two tackles (senior Kaeden Penny and junior Gavin Wilson). “We’ve got competition at running back, quarterback and wide receiver. It will be learning as we go that’s why I was excited tonight to see how our guys reacted playing against someone else in a game situation,” Schneider added.

Bixby began game week preparations following the scrimmage for the opener at Owasso and the resumption of a competitive series between the two state powerhouses in recent years. Since 2022, Bixby and Owasso have met twice a season – during the regular season and in the state playoffs.

Last season, Bixby defeated Owasso (49-21) in the season opening Battle of the Burbs at the University of Tulsa’s H. A. Chapman Stadium before downing the Rams (31-17) in the Class 6A-1 state championship game in Edmond.

In 2024, the Rams thumped the Spartans 40-21 in Owasso before Bixby pulled out a dramatic 43-42 overtime victory in the state title game.

In 2023, Bixby rolled to a 42-16 season opening win over OHS in the Battle of the Burbs at TU before defeating the Rams 56-14 in the state semifinals. And, in 2022, Bixby won the inaugural Battle of the Burbs 49-14 in the season opener and ended the season with a 69-6 win over the Rams in the Class 6A-1 state finals.

The Rams have outstanding returning talent and transfer talent on both sides of the ball. The offense is led by three-year starter Drew Frankenfield, a 6-2, 205-pound senior, who is considered the Tulsa area’s top quarterback.

He led Owasso to a 10-3 record and state runner-up finish last season, passing for 3,008 yards, completing 63 percent of his passes, while throwing 26 TD passes and rushing for eight TDs.

Bixby built a 14-0 lead in the first half of last year’s state championship with Owasso before the Rams trimmed the gap to 14-6 at halftime and tied the game in the third quarter. Bixby outscored OHS 14-3 in the final quarter to secure the win.

Bixby’s defense limited Owasso’s rushing game to 77 yards, but the Rams’ Frankenfield passed for 286 yards and one TD while Ram teammate Julius Wilson led the way with seven pass receptions for 116 yards and a TD.

Bixby amassed 434 yards of total offense in holding off the Rams in the 2025 finale.

“They’ve got super talented guys, and they have a three-year starter at quarterback,” Bixby’s Montgomery said of the Rams, led by veteran head coach Bill Blankenship. “They are going to be good ... they always are.”

SPECIAL TEAMS – There will be new faces handling key roles for Bixby’s special teams this season after the Spartans lost last year’s starters to graduation.

“Lincoln Aragona came from Union but he’s originally from Louisiana ... he has done a really good job kicking. He made a field goal tonight and made all his extra points, so he did a good job,” said Spartan assistant Trevor Suffal, the special teams’ coordinator.

“Jake Nielsen (senior offensive lineman) is snapping and Kaiden Flowers (junior defensive back) is holding.

“Landon Haddon is punting for us ... he also plays tight end and linebacker. He’s not a traditional punter but he’s a good athlete. In the return game we have BJ Jones and Hilkyah Sampson and we’re trying to get those guys chances in space.

“Coach Montgomery’s big deal is winning in the margins and special teams is one of those, so we’ve got to be dialed in and ready to go. The talent is there, obviously. We’ve got guys willing to do a good job and put out effort on special teams,” he added.

NOTES – Bixby, 13-0 last season, has won 98 of its last 101 games while entering this season riding a 16-game winning streak. The Spartans have won 11 state championships in the past 12 years, including four consecutive titles since moving to the state’s largest classification. ...

Bixby’s game at Owasso will be aired again this season by The Sports Animal (FM 97.1) with Shawn Tiemann returning to handle play-by-play and Ethan Roe returning to provide color commentary. ... The Spartans were the No. 1 selection in the Tulsa World’s Preseason Ranking of Class 6A-1 teams last weekend followed by Broken Arrow, Owasso, Jenks, Mustang, Tulsa Union, Norman North, Edmond Memorial, Yukon and Edmond Deer Creek. ... Bixby and Owasso have played eight times in the past four years with the Spartans holding a 7-1 advantage, including three state championship wins over the Rams. During his tenure, Bixby head coach Loren Montgomery is 7-2 against Owasso, losing 44-20 in a regular season game at Bixby in 2010, his first season at BHS. ... Bixby’s talented lineman Kaeden Penny, a University of Oklahoma commitment, was recently named a preseason second-team All-American by MaxPreps. ... Owasso routed Springdale (Arkansas) Har-Ber, 28-0, in a half game scrimmage last Thursday at Tulsa Union. ... Shiloh Christian of Springdale, Arkansas, turned back Deer Creek by stopping a two-point conversion run short in salvaging a one-point half game victory prior to the Bixby-Sand Springs scrimmage last Friday.