

Spartans' Defense Shines in 13-6 Conquest of Jenks

By Ron Holt

TULSA - Normally explosive, No. 1 ranked Bixby scored its fewest points since 2017 during the Quik-Trip sponsored Battle for the Big Q against Jenks last Friday night at the University of Tulsa's H.A. Chapman Stadium.

Fortunately, Bixby's tenacious defense responded with a focused, gritty performance from start to finish in paving the way for the Spartans' 13-6 victory over nearby rival Jenks in front of an estimated crowd of 14,000. It was a victory that wasn't secured until the final horn.

Bixby (3-0) captured its fifth straight win over Jenks (1-2) and ninth in the past 10 meetings. The 13 points were the fewest by the Spartans since being blanked (21-0) by Booker T. Washington in the 2017 regular season. Jenks' six points were the Trojans fewest since scoring three points in a 9-3 loss at Tulsa Union in 2024.

It was far from a crisp performance for the Spartans on both sides of the ball. Bixby turned the ball over three times, was penalized seven times and missed assignments and tackles on defense. "We've got to clean up some things but we're 3-0 heading into a bye week, so that's good,"

Bixby head coach Loren Montgomery said afterward.

The Spartans quickly found themselves in a bind after fumbling away the game's opening kickoff with Jenks recovering at Bixby's 19-yard line. Four plays later, Jenks senior quarterback Landon Kizzar scored on one-yard keeper, but the Trojans misfired on the extra-point kick to lead 6-0 at the 10:31 mark of the opening quarter.

Bixby's first offensive possession ended when Jenks' Brann Pearce intercepted a pass by quarterback Reece Madden, giving Jenks the ball at Bixby's 14-yard line.

The Spartans' defense – featuring a sack by junior Connor Arant and a pass broken up by senior Nathan Hobbs – stalled Jenks' drive at the Spartans' 27 where a 35-yard field goal attempt missed wide left with 4:32 showing in the first stanza.

Bixby put together an extensive drive on its second possession before facing fourth-and-six from its own 42-yard line. The Spartans ran a fake punt as up man Jaxton Rice passed to Arant for a 16-yard gain and a first down in Jenks' territory.

The Trojans stopped Bixby short on fourth-and-two, taking over at their own 24-yard line but four plays later, Hobbs belted Kizzar causing a fumble which teammate Jack Gill recovered at the JHS 24.

Bixby drove to Jenks' four-yard line on its next possession before settling for a 21-yard field goal by senior kicker Lincoln Aragona, narrowing the deficit to 6-3 with 6:29 left before halftime.

After Bixby's defense forced a three-and-out and Trojan punt, the Spartans took the lead when senior quarterback Isaiah Butcher IV found an opening to his right for an untouched 42-yard touchdown burst with 4:09 left in the first half. Aragona kicked the conversion for the 10-6 lead.

The defensive battle continued in the second half with Jenks threatening after recovering a Spartan fumble at its own 38. The drive reached Bixby's 39 before Spartan linebacker Cain Brackney hustled for a sack of Kizzar and a 13-yard loss before the Trojans were forced to punt early in the fourth quarter.

"We played hard but that's how our practices have been. We go head-to-head in practices so that was nothing new tonight," said Brackney, who is a defensive mainstay. "We just made a lot of mistakes but at the end we came together, bonded as brothers and pushed through.

"Coach (Rodney) Flowers get us fired up with his speeches and how into it he is ... how well he coaches us is phenomenal. I feel like I can do better as a player. Personally, I don't feel like I

should miss tackles, but I've missed quite a few in the past few games. I've got to work on that ... it's unacceptable."

Midway through the final frame Jenks drove into Spartan territory, thanks to a 33-yard pass from Kizziar to talented senior Kailib Dillard. The Trojans marched to Bixby's 16-yard line before the drive ended on back-to-back incomplete passes.

Bixby's final drive was kept alive by a 44-yard pass from senior quarterback Preston Carter to 5-11, 181-pound senior Brett Kaste to Jenks' 24-yard line. The Spartans increased their lead to 13-6 moments later when Aragano booted a 26-yard field goal with 3:22 remaining in the contest.

The intensely played game went down to the wire with the Trojans overcoming negative plays and penalties to keep a drive alive to the Spartan 23-yard line with four seconds left. Kizziar's desperation pass, however, was knocked down by Hobbs as time expired.

"I was just looking for the ball with four seconds left ... you just went out there and gave it everything you've got," Hobbs said of the final play. "We work our butts off but we're still sloppy and we've got to keep working." Hobbs ended with seven total tackles, one sack, one fumble caused and two passes defended.

Despite the lack of scoring, Bixby's offense was productive, finishing with 401 yards of total offense and 268 yards rushing. The Spartans averaged 5.8 yards per rush. Butcher had another effective rushing effort, gaining 197 yards on 24 carries and scoring once.

"Not a lot of points tonight, it was kind of opposite of last year's game," coach Montgomery said of Bixby's 66-35 win at Jenks in 2025. "We didn't have a lot of points, but we made some first downs when we needed to and we hung in there. The defense was phenomenal."

Senior linebacker Ben Puckett had an outstanding performance, leading the defense with 21 total tackles, including nine unassisted stops and two tackles for loss. Senior defensive back Kaiden Flowers recorded 10 tackles, seven unassisted, while Brackney ended with eight total tackles, including four solo stops.

It was another game this season where most defensive starters were on the field for four quarters. The Spartans' conditioning and depth paid dividends last Friday.

"I felt like we played like a team today, I feel like we communicated well with a lot of motions they had and we just tried to make tackles," said Flowers, who has made his presence known in each of Bixby's three games this season.

"They had a lot of talent ... we knew we'd have to play well for four quarters. The coaches made sure we were in good shape, working all of us hard all summer so we'd be ready for the games.

"I'm very excited," Flowers said of starting during his senior season. "I definitely believed in myself from the start but the more we go I also see this team's confidence growing."

Coach Montgomery applauded the team's effort as the Spartans played another game this season under extreme heat conditions.

"It was a war of attrition, and we've got a bunch of guys going both ways. But we still used a bunch of depth, which is good," Montgomery noted.

DEFENSIVE EFFORT – For the second straight year, Bixby's defense blanked Jenks in the second half of a pair of Spartan victories.

In last Friday's win, Jenks's high-powered offense was limited to 257 yards of total offense, including 29 yards rushing. The Trojans averaged 1.1 yards per rush against the Spartan defenders. Jenks also turned the ball over twice.

This was a significant feat for the Spartan defense. Jenks entered the game averaging 42 points per game after a season-opening loss (34-33) to Southlake Carroll (Texas) in the Cotton Bowl and a 50-13 win at Rogers, Arkansas.

“Jenks offensively does an amazing job. Hats off to coach (Tyler) Chronister and those guys, they have a great scheme and a great plan,” Bixby’s longtime defensive coordinator Rodney Flowers said afterward. “Our guys had a great week of work and made it as much mental as it was physical. We had some busts and misses, things we’ve got to fix but overall, I think we did a pretty good job.

“I’ll be honest with you ... that just shows the character in our kids. Probably some people are counting us out because we lost so many players in the back end, but these guys are going to war every single day.

“I couldn’t be prouder of the guys in the back end, guys like BJ (Jones), (Hilkyah) Sampson, Cole Seager, (Lincoln) Fugate, Kaiden Flowers, Maverick Owens ... all those guys just did a great job.”

BYE WEEK – After battling three rugged non-district opponents to start the season, Bixby has a bye week before beginning the challenging Class 6A District 1 schedule. Jenks is also idle this week.

“We’ll cut some things back a little, but we’ll try to keep our schedule as normal as possible,” coach Montgomery said. “It looks like it’s going to be another hot week, so we’ll probably be going in the mornings again.

We’ve had 24 6 a.m. practices which kinda wears on the kids, but they seem to bounce back. We’ll cut back some and shorten some practices.”

Bixby returns to action on Friday, Sept. 25, when the Spartans visit Mustang for the second year in a row. The Broncos (2-1) are idle this week.

NOTABLES – With the win over Jenks, Bixby has won 19 straight games and has won 101 of its last 104 games. ... The Spartans were ranked No. 46 nationally by MaxPreps. ... Bixby captains last week were Nathan Hobbs, Kaeden Penny, Ben Puckett and Connor Arant. ... This season, senior wide receiver Brett Kaste has recorded two pass receptions for 77 yards, but each catch came at a pivotal time against Stillwater and Jenks. Against Stillwater, Kaste caught a 33-yard pass from Preston Carter on second-and-five starting at Bixby’s 32-yard line late in the first half. The drive ended in a touchdown and 28-6 BHS halftime lead. Kaste’s 44-yard reception against Jenks eventually led to SHS’s final points – a field goal. ... After a solid junior season at Tulsa Union, senior linebacker/running back Cain Brackney transferred to Bixby this season. “I fit like a glove ... I was welcomed with open arms. I love these guys like family. This is the craziest, most unique thing I’ve ever done, and I’m extremely blessed to have this opportunity to be able to play at this stadium,” Brackney said of playing in the Battle for the Big Q and playing for the first time at TU’s stadium. ... Spartan senior kicker Lincoln Aragona contributed one extra point kick and two field goals against the Trojans. ... Through three games, Bixby senior quarterback Isaiah Butcher IV has 463 yards rushing, averaging 7.3 yards per rush and 154.3 yards per game. The 6-0, 215-pounder has capitalized on a combination of power running and breakaway speed. ... Jenks was led offensively by quarterback Landon Kizziar, who was 20-of-37 passing for 228 yards while Florida commitment Kailib Dillard caught nine passes for 143 yards. Punter Promised Johnson punted five times for a 40.8 yard per punt average, pinning the Spartans inside their own 20-yard line three times.

Bixby 13, Jenks 6

FIRST QUARTER

JHS – Landon Kizziar 1 run (kick failed), 10:31

SECOND QUARTER

BHS – Lincoln Aragona 21 field goal, 6:29

BHS – Isaiah Butcher IV 42 run (Aragona kick), 4:49

FOURTH QUARTER

BHS – Aragona 26 field goal, 3:22