

Bixby Topples Stillwater, 56-28, in Battle of No. 1 Teams

By Ron Holt

In a battle of top-ranked teams, Bixby's Class 6A-1 Spartans overcame the quirky defensive approach by Stillwater's Class 6A-II Pioneers and a couple of odd bounces of the ball in capturing a 56-28 victory in front of a large, sweltering Lee Snider Stadium crowd here last Friday night.

Bixby improved to 2-0 on the season and prepares this week for Friday night's (Sept. 11) non-district battle against Jenks at the University of Tulsa's H.A. Chapman Stadium. Stillwater (1-1) is idle this week.

Stillwater and Bixby have battled often in recent seasons - especially in Class 6A-II playoffs - and the Pioneers' defense, which often features movement among the front seven, has been a problem.

The Spartans have enjoyed limited success passing the ball against SHS but have capitalized with a strong rushing game while winning eight of the last nine meetings.

"It wasn't a clean game give Stillwater credit for that ... they have an uber aggressive defense and force a lot of mistakes," Bixby head coach Loren Montgomery said afterward. "We got away with a win, and we know that's a good football team, so we'll move on."

Bixby's special teams sparked the Spartans as senior Keanu James returned the opening kickoff 56 yards to the Pioneers' 35-yard line. BHS converted two fourth-down plays during the ensuing drive with quarterback Iasiah Butcher IV rushing 18 yards for a first down on fourth-and-one before scoring from 16 yards out on fourth-and-seven with 8:31 left in the first quarter.

Senior Lincoln Aragana kicked the conversion for a quick 7-0 Bixby lead.

Bixby then forced a Pioneer punt and took over at its own 19. After an eight-yard run by Butcher, a pitch attempt by Butcher to James fell to the turf and was ruled as a fumble. It was returned 27 yards for a touchdown by Stillwater senior Bradford Mitchell at the 6:35 mark.

The point-after attempt was blocked by Gavin Wilson, leaving BHS holding a 7-6 lead. It was the second game with Wilson blocking an extra point attempt.

Bixby's next drive moved to Stillwater's 24-yard line before senior quarterback Preston Carter was hit on a pass attempt with the Pioneers' Caden Johnson making a diving interception. The Spartans' defense forced against SHS punt with the hosts taking over at their own 38-yard line.

Aided by back-to-back encroachment penalties on SHS, the Spartans expanded their lead to 14-6 as senior Jack Gill ran three yards for a TD and Aragana toed the conversion with 6:05 showing in the second quarter.

The lead grew to 21-6 on a 67-yard TD pass from Carter to sophomore speedster Hilkyah Sampson with 4:52 left before halftime.

Bixby's next drive - highlighted by a 33-yard pass from Carter to senior Brett Kaste - advanced to Stillwater's six-yard as Gill scored with eight seconds left and Aragana converting the conversion kick as the Spartans led 28-6 at intermission.

An 11-yard touchdown scamper by Carter helped the Spartans build up a 35-6 lead, heading into a high-scoring fourth quarter.

The fourth quarter featured a one-yard TD run by Pioneer junior quarterback Satank Taptto and a one-yard TD plunge by Bixby's Butcher and two-yard TD run by SHS junior running back Jaedan Adams.

Stillwater attempted on an onside kick following Adams' score but Bixby's James returned the kick 64 yards for a touchdown and 49-21 lead before the Pioneers capitalized on a gift as Bixby

freshman Maverick Owens leaped high for a possible interception but the ball was tipped into the hands of SHS's sophomore Cyrus Johnson, narrowing the deficit to 49-28 with 6:39 left in the game.

Bixby answered again, thanks to a 15-yard pass interception return by senior linebacker Logan Haddon to Stillwater's nine-yard line. Gill ran for his second TD of the game on a two-yard run with 1:40 remaining.

"Whatever coach needs me to do, I'm ready to go ... I was just looking for that opportunity and it came tonight," said the 5-11, 205-pound Gill, who also plays linebacker. "It felt good being back out there on offense.

"Stillwater's defense is hard to ID before the play ... you pretty much have to play on the fly and be aggressive. There are always things you can take away from each game ... if we keep playing like that, we'll get beat.

"But I feel we have the potential to be a great team, but we've got to put the little things together," added Gill, who rushed for 25 yards and two TDs on four attempts, averaging 6.3 yards per carry. Against the rugged Stillwater defense, the Spartans finished with 267 yards passing and 221 yards rushing with six rushing touchdowns for a total offensive output of 488 yards.

"It's challenging, you've got to stay focused and just be patient," Bixby's 6-6, 288-pound senior starting center Jake Nielsen said of SHS's defense. "I think we blocked pretty well, it's just a tough defense to play against. "We had some mistakes we've got to clean up."

On playing Jenks on Friday, he said: "It's a big game for sure ... they're a good team." Nielsen spent the summer recovering from a broken foot which required surgery.

Bixby battled throughout during the annual Military Appreciation game despite some adversity, and three turnovers but the Spartans understand continued improvement is needed going forward.

"There were some oddities that popped up and probably a couple of scores that shouldn't have been," coach Montgomery added of the game. "We had the tipped pass and the refs said we were fumbling the ball when we pitched it, so I'll have to look at that one.

"Tonight was a tough game for all those new guys playing against that defense. They bank on you not being patient and on you getting behind the chains. We've got to clean up everything ... we're nowhere near where we need to be. We had a ton of silly mistakes, busts, things like that... we'll get it fixed," he noted.

NEXT GAME – Bixby renews its longtime series against Jenks in the Quik-Trip sponsored "Battle for the Big Q" at the University of Tulsa's H. A. Chapman Stadium, starting at 7 p.m. Friday (Sept. 11).

Jenks, under head coach Adam Gaylor, evened its season record to 1-1 after routing Rogers, Arkansas, 50-13 on the road last Friday night.

Trojan senior quarterback Landon Kizzar passed for 298 yards and three touchdowns in the win at Rogers while senior Kailib Dillard caught nine passes for 174 yards and two TDs. CJ Wright rushed for 85 yards and two scores.

The Trojans opened the season, losing 34-33 against Southlake Carroll (Texas) in a high-profile prep Red River rivalry in the Cotton Bowl in Dallas.

In last year's game between the two teams at Jenks, Bixby outscored the Trojans 28-0 in the second half in rolling to a 66-35 victory.

Spartan quarterback Carson Kirby had an outstanding game, passing for 266 yards and six touchdowns while rushing four times for 45 yards. Senior Jason Moll was equally outstanding as

he rushed for 278 yards on 23 carries, scoring three times. Senior Braeden Presley caught four passes for 154 yards and one TD.

Senior Maverick Nance led the defense with 10 total tackles while Tyler Wright, Emory Snyder and Nathan Hobbs each had seven tackles.

Jenks scored 35 first half points behind two touchdown receptions by Dillard from Kizziar, and two TD runs by Oklahoma State signee KD Jones.

Bixby defeated the Trojans 21-7 in 2024 while the two teams played twice during the 2023 and 2022 seasons. In 2023, Bixby defeated Jenks, 31-14, in the regular season and 49-21 in the Class 6A-I state finals. In 2022, Jenks edged Bixby 38-35 in the regular season before the Spartans captured a 28-14 win in the state semifinals.

Since Bixby began its run of state championships in 2014, the Spartans hold a 9-5 record in the series with Jenks. The Spartans 57-7 romp at Jenks in 2019 was Bixby's largest margin of victory while Jenks defeated the Spartans 66-20 in 2014 and 58-24 in 2015 for JHS' largest margin of victory.

QUARTERBACKS – Bixby's trio of quarterbacks – seniors Isaiah Butcher IV and Preston Carter and junior Reece Madden continued producing for the second straight game.

The 6-2 Carter passed for 161 yards and one TD while being intercepted twice while the 6-0 Butcher and 6-3 Madden each passed for 53 yards. Combined, Bixby's quarterbacks completed 26-of-32 passes for 267 yards and one TD.

On the season, the trio have combined to complete 45 passes in 54 attempts, averaging 83 percent. "All three of them are doing some pretty good stuff with different skills sets so we'll continue to work and build on it," coach Montgomery said.

Carter, who transferred from Broken Arrow this season, has completed 13-of-16 passes for 167 yards through two games while rushing for 72 yards on 17 carries. He's adjusting to his new team and his role.

"It was pretty instant ... I feel close to the guys. They all welcomed me and it's just a great community to come to," Carter said of joining the Spartans.

"My job is to be able to get the ball to our playmakers, getting the ball to our fast guys and I also have the ability to run it so I hope I can be a dual threat," Carter said afterward. "I threw the ball around to different places pretty well."

After having a pass intercepted, Carter responded minutes later with the stunning touchdown pass to Hilkyah Sampson. "It was a great ego boost, it felt good to go down and score," he added "It was definitely not the best game, but it was a good second week game ... we definitely need to clean a lot of things up with the big game next week. We'll get things right and be ready to go."

HEAT WAVE – For the second straight week, Bixby's players endured playing a game in elevated temperatures during the lengthy heat wave. The Spartans, however, had few players leaving the field with leg cramps.

"I think our kids are wiped out," coach Montgomery noted after Friday's game. "We've been nervous about that (cramping) since we've been practicing in the morning instead of in the heat. But the last two weeks I felt like our kids held up really well."

NOTABLES – Bixby is riding an 18-game winning streak while the Spartans have won 100 of their last 103 games. The Spartans were ranked No 47 nationally by MaxPreps. ... Stillwater was held to one yard of total offense during the first half of Friday's game. In two games, Bixby's defense has limited opponents' rushing attack as Owasso rushed for 32 yards and Stillwater for 22 yards. ... Bixby's captains last Friday were Nathan Hobbs, Kaeden Penny, Ben Puckett and

Gavin Wilson. ... A total of 22 Spartans recorded tackles against Stillwater with reserves playing quality minutes late, which will increase depth. Senior safety Kaiden Flowers led BHS with seven total tackles – four unassisted - and three passes defended. He had a couple of bone-jarring hits to break up passes. Senior linebacker Gage Cheatham was credited with five tackles, including three solo stops. Junior Connor Arant had Bixby's lone sack. ... Bixby kicker Lincoln Aragano, who came to the Spartan program this season, has successfully converted 13 straight extra-point kicks this season. Against Stillwater, Aragana showed his leg strength as he sent four kickoffs into the end zone for touchbacks. "I've been able to do that for a while but the last couple of weeks it's gotten better and my teammates believing in me gives me the confidence," Aragana noted. "Once you hit one (touchback) you can take off. All the coaches have made this feel like home since I got here." ... Stillwater quarterback Satank Taptto passed for 235 yards and one TD and one interception but completed only 33 percent (9-of-27) of his passes. SHS averaged 1.4 yards per carry on 21 rushing attempts. Cyrus Johnson was the top receiver with three catches for 107 yards and a TD. Pioneer linebacker Bryson Brown, a Baylor commitment, led the defensive effort with 16 total tackles and one sack. ... Bixby recorded 25 first downs while Stillwater ended with six.

Bixby 56, Stillwater 28

FIRST QUARTER

BHS – Isaiah Butcher IV 16 run (Lincoln Aragano kick), 8:31

SHS – Bradford Mitchell 27 fumble return (kick blocked), 6:35

SECOND QUARTER

BHS – Tylan Montgomery 3 run (Aragano kick), 6:05

BHS – Hilkyah Sampson 67 pass from Preston Carter (Aragano kick),

BHS – Jack Gill 6 run (Aragano kick), 8.3

THIRD QUARTER

BHS – Carter 15 run (Aragano kick), 6:11

FOURTH QUARTER

SHS – Satank Taptto 1 run (Zach Gabbert kick), 10:43

BHS – Butcher 1 run (Aragano kick), 8:48

SHS – Jaedan Adams 2 run (Chandler Johnson pass from Taptto), 7:36

BHS – Keanu James 64 kickoff return (Aragano kick), 7:31

SHS – Caden Johnson 78 pass from Taptto (Gabbert kick), 6:39

BHS – Gill 2 run (Aragano kick), 1:40