

Unbeaten Bixby Opens District Play at Mustang Friday

By Ron Holt

For the second straight season, Bixby's unbeaten Spartans travel to Mustang for another high-stakes Class 6A-1 District 1 battle at Bronco Stadium. The district opener for both teams kicks off at 7 p.m.

Top-ranked Bixby (3-0) was successful through a challenging non-league schedule, winning at Owasso (35-27), at home against Stillwater (56-28) and 13-6 against Jenks at Tulsa University's H. A. Chapman Stadium. The Spartans were idle last week.

Tenth-ranked Mustang (2-1), coached by Lee Blankenship, won 27-7 at Choctaw, lost at Yukon (36-35) and defeated Norman (44-6) at home in non-league play prior to its bye week.

This is a tough district opener for both squads. "Without a doubt," Bixby head coach Loren Montgomery agreed. "That's one of the things we've been talking about with the guys that these are extremely important games because the top two teams in the district get a first-round bye and homefield advantage.

"They (Mustang) are extremely talented. I think No. 5 Gabriel Osborne is probably the best player in the state. He's big, tall, physical, electric ... all those things. They have several new skill guys that are really talented as well. No. 1 (Obama Bell) is a dandy, and the quarterback (Kason Delgado) is playing at his fourth school.

"They've got (Maddox) Gregg in their defensive line, and he's been the starter at a couple of other schools. Mustang has a really good offensive line with physical dudes ... they'll try to run the ball down our throats and then take shots at their skill guys."

The 6-1, 200-pound senior Delgado, who played at, in order, Tulsa Union, Edmond Santa Fe, Muskogee and Mustang, has passed for 354 yards and three touchdowns this season while rushing for 51 yards and two TDs.

Obama, a 510, 165-pound senior transfer from Putnam City West, caught five passes for 204 yards and two TDs while Osborne, a 6-2, 180-pound senior, who committed to Oklahoma, has four pass receptions for 119 yards and two TDs.

Defensively, the Broncos are led by 5-11, 185-pound junior free safety Aboss Deason, who is credited with 28 total tackles, 15 unassisted, while lineman Gregg, a 6-3, 235-pound senior, has 25 total tackles, 15 solo stops, five tackles for loss and two sacks. Gregg was credited with 56 tackles, 3.5 sacks and 15.5 tackles for loss last season while playing at Edmond North.

Sophomore safety Tylen Duncan leads the team in interceptions with three, which he returned for a total of 80 yards.

Bixby has won the past two meetings between the teams, capturing a 38-22 victory last season at Mustang in a game which was delayed nearly two hours by weather and didn't end until around midnight. The Spartans captured a 64-35 win at Lee Snider Stadium in 2024.

The Broncos finished 8-4 last season and advanced to the Class 6A-I state quarterfinals before falling to Broken Arrow (29-14).

Bixby's coaches tried to keep a normal routine during the bye week by correcting mistakes in all phases while game planning for Mustang.

"I thought our kids did a real good job last week ... we got a head start on Mustang, which I thought was good since they are so talented," coach Montgomery added.

SPARTAN 'D' – Facing three talented non-district opponents, Bixby's defense has been challenged against a trio of explosive offenses. The Spartans answered each challenge and continue striving for improvement as district play begins.

In last week's 13-6 win over Jenks at TU's H.A. Chapman Stadium, Spartan senior linebacker Ben Puckett was credited with 21 total tackles, including nine unassisted stops.

Unofficially, it's the most tackles by a Spartan since senior Colby Tillman recorded 24 tackles in a 24-21 win at Sand Springs in 2017.

In recent seasons, Bixby's starting defenders have seen limited playing time since many Spartan games have been overwhelming wins. In three games this season, the starters have been extended and responded with solid efforts.

Puckett is a 6-4, 208-pound senior and the younger brother of former Spartan standout linebackers Jack and Hank. Through three games, he's leading Bixby in total tackles with 33, including 17 solo stops and four tackles for loss.

Senior linebacker Cain Brackney and senior safety Kaiden Flowers have recorded 22 total tackles each while Brackney has 14 solo stops and six tackles for loss and Flowers is credited with four passes defended and a recovered fumble.

Senior linebacker Nathan Hobbs has 17 total tackles, a sack and a fumble caused while junior Connor Arant has recorded 12 tackles, four tackles for loss and a team-leading three sacks.

Senior Lincoln Fugate is credited with 10 total tackles while seniors Cole Seager and Logan Haddon each have intercepted a pass.

NOTEBOOK – Bixby is ranked No. 41 nationally by MaxPreps entering this week. ... Bixby's game at Mustang will be broadcast by The Sports Animal, FM-97.1 with Shawn Tiemann providing play-by-play commentary and Ethan Roe serving as color analyst. ... Last week, Bixby held its Steak Night, which is a reward for players and coaches who had perfect attendance at summer workouts. As in the past, numerous individuals and businesses contributed to the Steak Night success. "I think we had like 68 guys that were 100 percent attendance guys," coach Montgomery noted. ... In last year's 38-22 Spartan victory at Mustang, senior running back Jayson Moll led Bixby offensively with 311 yards rushing and one touchdown on 30 carries while senior quarterback Carson Kirby passed for 139 yards and one TD. Jack Gill rushed for 94 yards and two TDs while Connor Arant caught a 15-yard TD pass and Bradley Thao kicked three field goals. Senior linebackers Cord Nolan and Trey McGlothlin recorded eight tackles and one sack each. Mustang was led by quarterback Jaden O'Neal's 320 passing yards and two TDs and Ryder Murphy's nine receptions for 125 yards and one TD. Defensively, last season MHS was led by strong safety Tayten Duncan's 20 tackles, 16 unassisted, and Osborne's 16 tackles, 11 solos. ... Through three games this season, Bixby's balanced offense is led by senior quarterback Isaiah Butcher IV, who has passed for 131 yards and one TD while rushing 63 times for 463 yards and six TDs. Senior quarterback Preston Carter has 211 yards passing and one TD while rushing for 86 yards and one score. Junior Reece Madden passed for 205 yards and one TD. Sophomore Hilkyah Sampson has 108 receiving yards and one TD. ... Other Class 6A-1 District 1 games Friday include Edmond North (2-1) at Edmond Memorial (2-1), Broken Arrow (3-0) at Norman North (3-0) and Southmoore (0-3) at Westmoore (0-3).

SPORTS MEDICINE – Because of extreme heat conditions, Bixby's coaches held practice sessions in the early morning hours, continuing through last week and until the temperatures dwindle.

It's been a grind on the coaches and players, but it's also affected Bixby's athletic training staff led by 15th-year head athletic trainer Stephen Moss, assistants Christa Montgomery and Savannah Delaney, and 26 sports medicine student aides – nine seniors, six juniors, four sophomores and seven freshmen.

“We have near 100 percent attendance working our 6 a.m. practices. One of the most dedicated and hard-working groups I’ve had in my 15 years,” said Moss. “Junior Ainsley Lane and ninth grader Raina Lee play on our volleyball team and balance their schedules to help us out when they can.

“Several of our seniors are wanting to explore the pediatric healthcare options and continue to serve community youth. Collectively, this has been one of my most favorite years so far. We have a great blend of veteran student aides that are continuing to shine and share their knowledge and mentor our younger students,” he added

“We could not be prouder of all of their sacrifices and tireless work ethic that they have displayed this year. With the new heat restrictions, we told them it would be a different type of year. They have not hesitated once and together they continue to attack the daily challenges we encounter.

“I tell them all the time ‘you can find an excuse, or you can find a way,’ and they have wholeheartedly chosen the path to help our Spartan players and coaches to have the greatest successes on and off the field,” he added.

Bixby’s student medicine aides include Maci Mauldin-Kelly, Maggie McConnell, Layla Tipton, Piper LeGrange, Ainsley Rose, Brooklyn Herrera, Ella Dennis, Camryn Steele, Raina Lee, Angel Childress, Grace Aguilar, Jordan Flores, Tylar Lane, Lexy Yang, Chloe Terrel, Amira Shakhin, Jaliyan Fontenot, Bryce Kraft, Isabella Tobin, Kennedy Small, Kayde Kaiser, Laila Venema, KayLynn Arsee, Ella McLemore, KateLyn McBride and Taylin Hausler.