

Bixby Topples Choctaw, District Opener Set Friday

By Ron Holt

CHOCTAW –Big plays offensively and key stops defensively highlighted Bixby High's 55-27 victory at Class 6A-II No. 3 Choctaw in the final non-district game this season last Friday night here at Bill Jensen Field. It was a marathon contest, finishing almost three and a half hours after the opening kickoff.

While the Spartans made positive strides in all three phases, a sloppy finish and frustrating penalties left coaches and players aware of improvement needed going forward.

The Spartans (2-1) return home Friday (Sept. 27) to host the Jenks Trojans in the Class 6A-1 District 1 opener at Lee Snider Field.

"We had turnovers or silly personal fouls, and in order to play championship football you just can't do that," Spartan head coach Loren Montgomery said. "We've improved in a lot of the details of football, like lining up correctly but in the big picture of being a disciplined unit we're not that yet.

"I thought we did some really good things but then we lost some focus. It's the little things that's hurting us right now. Defensively, we made some really big plays like on third and fourth down ... we had some key sacks and key stops. It seemed like we had a lot of key stops."

After the defense forced Choctaw to go three-and-out on its opening possession, the Spartans went on an eight play, 46-yard drive ending in a six-yard touchdown pass from junior quarterback Carson Kirby to junior wide receiver Tyler Wright. Bixby failed on a two-point conversion, leading 6-0 with 8:40 showing.

It was the second touchdown reception this season for Wright, a starting safety who is figuring more often in Bixby's offensive plans the past two games. This season, he has nine receptions for 164 yards and two TDs.

"Last week we had some people banged up so I went out there and made some plays so they thought 'maybe he can play,'" Wright said afterward. "I'm enjoying it. I'm a lot bigger and a lot faster this year. Last year I was like 160 (pounds), this year I'm at 175 or 180 ... I think it's helped."

Choctaw, 1-2, was also ready to play as the Yellowjackets scored in one play on their next possession as senior quarterback Cash Williams hit junior Morgan Mayor over the middle for an 80-yard TD pass play. CHS also failed on a two-point conversion run leaving the game tied at 6-6 at the 8:27 mark of the first stanza.

Kirby ignited the Spartans' next score. After dropping back to pass he instead saw unoccupied territory to his left and scrambled for 56 yards to the CHS 10. One play later, he passed to junior Catcher DeHart for a 10-yard TD, Bradley Tao's conversion kick left Bixby holding a 13-6 lead with 7:04 left in the first quarter.

On their next possession, Bixby expanded the lead to 19-6 after a 42-yard TD pass play from Kirby to DeHart with 5:05 showing.

Choctaw set up its next scoring possession after a pass interception near the end zone by Yellowjacket junior Da'Jon Green. A lengthy CHS drive was aided by a pass interference penalty and personal foul flag on the Spartans and ended with a one-yard TD run by Mayor, trimming the deficit to 19-13 entering the second frame.

A 22-yard pass from Kirby to junior Cord Nolan on Bixby's next possession moved the ball to Choctaw's 28 where senior Bode Cairl, who finished with 99 yards rushing on 11 carries, exploded through a gaping hole for a 28-yard TD run and 27-13 Spartan lead. A two-yard TD plunge by senior Cooper Parker and a one-yard scoring run by Cairl lifted BHS to a 41-13 halftime lead.

Choctaw went on a lengthy drive on its first possession of the second half, driving to the BHS two before Spartan junior cornerback Braeden Presley ripped the ball away from Choctaw backup quarterback Landon Gatson and scampered down the sideline for a 99-yard fumble return for a touchdown as the Spartan lead grew to 48-13 with 6:13 showing in the third quarter.

“The play before that I didn’t do my job and let the team down ... I had to make up for that,” Presley said. “I saw him trying to reach the ball across and he wasn’t in yet, so I just reached out and grabbed it and took off. It felt good.

“I knew we weren’t getting the energy we needed since we let them drive on us, so I thought maybe this sparked our team ... it looked like it did.”

A one-yard TD run by Spartan freshman B.J. Jones increased Bixby’s advantage to 55-13 with 10:05 left in the game. Choctaw rallied for a 14-yard TD scramble by Williams and an 84-yard TD sprint by Gatson against reserves to narrow the final margin.

Choctaw finished 0-for-7 on fourth down attempts, a couple of times in its own end of the field, as the Spartan defenders responded by making pivotal plays.

“We knew from playing them in the district that going for it on fourth down was kind of the way they roll,” Spartan defensive coordinator Rodney Flowers said. “They don’t punt much but we knew that going in. We tried to be prepared ... we did a good job of getting off the field.

“Our kids played hard ... we could have finished the game better, but we were trying to get some of the young guys in there because you never know when it’s their turn.

“We got schemed a little early and they threw the kitchen sink at us, but our guys did a good job of overcoming all the motion, trick plays and shifts to finish the first half strong. We extended one drive with penalties that always hurt you.

“We’ve got to get ready for a really good program,” coach Flowers said of the Jenks district opener.

“We’ve got to make sure we’re more disciplined ... we can’t do dumb things to extend drives or lose people in coverage. We’ve got to be sound. There are so many things we’ve got to get better at before next week.”

NEXT GAME – The two teams expected to battle for the Class 6A-1 District 1 title – No. 2 Bixby’s Spartans and No. 4 Jenks – kick off district play at 7 p.m. Friday (Sept. 27) at Bixby’s Lee Snider Field in a feature game of the week.

Jenks, coming off a bye week, carries a 1-2 record into the district opener. In non-district play this season, the Trojans defeated Edmond Santa Fe (48-3), lost at home to Owasso (42-24) and fell at Tulsa Union (9-3).

Jenks, led by head coach Keith Riggs, features a talented offense led by junior running back Kaydin Jones, senior quarterback Owen Jones and two-way senior standout Sam Stone. The Trojans are equally talented on the defensive side.

In the win over Santa Fe, K. Jones had 207 total yards and scored three touchdowns while O. Jones passed for 230 yards and two TDs. In the loss to Owasso, K. Jones scored on a 10-yard run and caught a 17-yard TD pass from O. Jones. Penalties derailed Jenks’ offense in the loss at Union.

“I watched the game on TV (against Union), but I haven’t watched a lot of Jenks’ game film yet,” Coach Montgomery said. “You know they are going to be excellent ... they have phenomenal play makers everywhere and they are big and physical. We’ve got our work cut out for us.”

Jenks finished with a 9-5 record in 2023, overcoming a slow start. The Trojans lost to Bixby (31-14) in the regular season finale at home before losing to the Spartans (49-21) in the Class 6A-1 state championship game.

In 2022, Jenks snapped Bixby’s 58-game winning streak with a 38-35 win at Bixby in the regular season finale. Bixby, however, recorded a 28-14 win over the Trojans in the state semifinals that season.

In 2021, Bixby won 23-15 at Jenks in a non-district game; In 2020, Bixby captured a 42-41 win over JHS at home in a non-league game and in 2019, the Spartans rolled to a 57-7 win at Jenks.

Jenks holds the upper hand in the overall series but in seven games played the past five seasons Bixby holds a 6-1 record against the Trojans.

NOTABLES – Teacher Appreciation Night will be celebrated by the Spartans against Jenks. ... The Bixby-Jenks game will be broadcast over The Sports Animal, FM-97.1 with Shawn Tiemann providing play-by-play coverage and Mark Wozniak offering commentary. ... Team captains at Choctaw were Cooper Parker, Cord Nolan, Braeden Presley and Vincent Incremona. ... Offensively, BHS quarterback Carson Kirby has passed for 824 yards this season, completed .695 per cent of his passes and completed

seven touchdown passes while being picked off four times. He and senior running back Bode Cairl lead Bixby in rushing with 179 yards each. ... Junior linebacker Trey McGlothlin led Bixby's balanced defensive effort at Choctaw with nine total tackles, including seven solo stops and two tackles for loss while junior Dawson Madden had six total tackles and a tackle for loss. Cord Nolan, Brooks Dixon, Nathan Hobbs, Cooper Parker, Tyler Wright and Peyton Chronister each had five total tackles while Hobbs and Chronister were credited with sacks. ... Junior Cetcher DeHart contributed to Bixby's offense with eight pass receptions for 98 yards and two touchdowns against Choctaw. On the season he has 15 receptions for 142 yards and two scores. ... Choctaw ended with 12 penalties for 123 yards while the Spartans were flagged nine times for 70 yards. The Spartans have been penalized 27 times for 223 yards through three games. ... Choctaw was led offensively by quarterback Williams, who passed for 293 yards and one TD and ran for 91 yards and one score, Gatson rushed for 120 yards and a TD and receiver JuJu Smith had 13 pass receptions for 136 yards.

TAO IMPRESSIVE – Bixby's first year kicker Bradley Tao, a 5-10, 205-pound junior, had an impressive outing at Choctaw last Friday. Tao, playing football for the first season, boomed six kickoffs deep into the end zone giving Choctaw possession at its own 20-yard line.

His most impressive kick came with 10 minutes showing in the third quarter after Bixby was flagged for a personal foul following a Spartan touchdown. The penalty was enforced on the ensuing kickoff. Kicking from his own 25-yard line, Tao's kickoff reached the end zone.

"He was great tonight," Coach Montgomery said afterward. "After a 15-yard penalty he still gets the touchback. He did really good tonight.

"He's never kicked before, and I think he was nervous the first couple of games. He's gotten better, which is good for the defense."

Through three games, Tao is credited with 21 kickoffs, averaging 56 yards a kick. He's nine-for-nine on extra point kicks. He's yet to attempt a field goal.

BHS OPPONENTS – Spartan opponents Owasso (3-0), Edmond North (2-1), Enid (2-1) and Deer Creek-Edmond (3-0) had bye weeks. Results from other BHS games last week featured Sand Springs (1-2) winning 38-3 at Bishop Kelley, Moore (3-0) defeating Norman North 33-28, Mustang (3-0) romping past Westmoore 54-30 and Norman (3-0) capturing a 41-14 win at Piedmont.

District 1 games Friday (Sept. 27) include Jenks at Bixby, Moore at Mustang, Enid at Deer Creek and Norman at Edmond North.