

# Spartans Knock Off Previously Unbeaten Moore, 49-7

**By Ron Holt**

MOORE – Second-ranked Bixby dominated and misfired at times, but the Spartans played well enough to hand previously unbeaten and improved Moore a 49-7 loss in a Class 6A-1 District 1 game at Moore Lions Stadium last Friday night.

Second-ranked Bixby improved to 4-1 overall and sits at 2-0 in district play. Eighth-ranked Moore dropped to 4-1 and 1-1.

Bixby returns home Friday (Oct. 11) to host Edmond North in a Class 6A-1 District 1 game, starting at 7 p.m. at Lee Snider Field. Bixby also celebrates its annual Football Homecoming with ceremonies starting prior to kickoff.

“It was sloppy at times, and we didn’t hit on some shots. We needed to dial in a little better ... we didn’t connect when we had a couple of threes and out. We would have liked to put it away a lot sooner when we had opportunities,” veteran Spartan head coach Loren Montgomery said afterward.

“But let’s enjoy the win because it’s hard to win and that’s an undefeated team we beat tonight,” he added. Moore came to play from the outset as the Lions took the opening kickoff and drove from their own 20-yard line to the Spartans’ 18 before Bixby’s defense turned in the first key play in a night full of key plays when 5-10, 252-pound junior defensive tackle Hector Gracia threw Lion quarterback Malikai Miller for a two-yard loss on a fourth-and-two play.

Moore’s second possession ended in a punt thanks to tackles for losses of four and eight yards by Bixby’s Cooper Parker and Nathan Hobbs, respectively.

The Spartans then got untracked offensively, as a running into the punter penalty and holding penalty by the Lions extended the drive which ended in eight plays when junior quarterback Carson Kirby passed to junior Nathan Gonzales, who broke two tackle attempts before diving into the end zone for an 18-yard touchdown with 2:57 showing in the first quarter. Bradley Tao’s conversion gave BHS a 7-0 lead.

Bixby’s defense contributed to the next Spartan score as a pair of defenders blasted Lion receiver Jonathon Alexander forcing the ball into the air where Spartan Brooks Dixon intercepted turning the ball over to the offense at the MHS 17. On the first play, Kirby kept the ball and found running room outside for a touchdown with 19 seconds left in the first stanza.

Bixby failed on a conversion run but extended its lead to 13-0 entering the second quarter.

The Spartans scored on its first possession of the second quarter, taking only four plays to increase the lead to 21-0 at the 7:23 mark when Kirby threw the ball back to Presley who fired a 59-yard TD pass to senior Blake Hogshooter. Tao added the extra point kick.

Bixby’s first possession of the third quarter featured a 66-yard pass from Kirby to Hogshooter, carrying the ball to the hosts’ 13-yard line. Three plays later, senior running back Bode Cairl scored from three yards out. Tao’s conversion kick gave BHS a 28-0 lead at the 10:09 mark of the third frame.

Later in the third stanza, Bixby erupted again with a one-play scoring drive as Kirby handed to Presley, who followed effective blocking and found a seam outside as he raced 62 yards for a TD and 35-0 lead with 4:28 remaining.

“We’ve just been working on some plays for me to see if they would work and they had been working in practice ... we executed like we did in practice,” Presley said. On throwing a touchdown pass, he added, “I’ve always had the arm. We had a play in last year, but I kept messing it up in practice, so we didn’t run it.

“I redeemed myself tonight. I thought I under threw him the way he was looking but then he sped up, so I knew he had it ... I was happy.”

Coach Montgomery said of Presley’s play, “We’ve been trying to get him more involved. We had plans last week but between playing every snap defensively and returning kicks he was dead-legged a little. I’m proud of him, he’s doing good ... he’s coming along.”

Moore got on the scoreboard with 2:36 showing in the third quarter when Miller scrambled 22 yards for a touchdown, narrowing the deficit to 35-7.

Bixby closed out the scoring in the fourth quarter when junior receiver Tyler Wright ran 23 yards on a reverse for a touchdown and Tao kicked the conversion for a 42-7 lead with 11:36 showing in the final frame. The drive started after Hobbs recovered a fumbled punt at the Lion 23.

Spartan junior running back Gabe Blankenship scored on a two-yard run with 4:39 left in the game for the final margin.

Bixby's offensive numbers were creditable – 485 yards of total offense, averaging 8.8 yards per carry running the ball and 61 percent on pass completions. But the Spartans were hindered by seven penalties, two turnovers and ineffective execution at times.

"I mean we had a pretty good game plan coming in, but we need to do a better job executing the things we put in," said Kirby, who passed for 185 yards and one touchdown while running for 40 yards and a TD. "I don't feel like I played my best tonight.

"I feel like our defense played lights out. It was a great team win but I need to clean some things up for sure. They (Moore) are well coached, and they've gotten a lot better during the offseason, they are definitely better than last year. It was 21-0 at halftime and that's definitely not where we want to be ... we'll get that fixed," he added.

**NEXT GAME** – The Spartans return to the friendly confines of Spartan Stadium features a first ever meeting between Bixby and visiting Edmond North.

Edmond North - led by second-year head coach Carter Whitson who joined the Huskies after three seasons as head coach at Putnam City High – is 2-3 on the season and 0-2 in district play following last Friday's 55-24 loss against visiting and unbeaten Deer Creek-Edmond.

Deer Creek led 41-14 at halftime before being outscored by Edmond North 10-0 in the second half.

This season, the Huskies defeated Putnam City West (52-0) and won 41-35 at Edmond Santa Fe. EN lost at Edmond Memorial (22-13) before losing the district opener at Norman (30-0).

Edmond North, which has consistently competed in the state's largest classification, finished with a 3-8 record last season. The Huskies have struggled in recent seasons. Their last winning season was 7-5 in 2013 after going 10-2 in 2012.

Bixby celebrates Football Homecoming Thursday night which is a special event but is also a week that could be distracting for the players.

"You worry a little about focus, but I think our coaching staff has done a good job of putting enough on their plate that they have to focus, or they won't know what to do," coach Montgomery said. "Also, I think our more mature guys understand that you can't just show up and people bow down to you."

Broadcasting Friday's game is The Sports Animal, FM97.1, starting with the pre-game show at 6:30 p.m. Shawn Tiemann is the play-by-play voice while Mark Wozniak provides color commentary.

**NOTABLES** – Captains for the Moore game were Cooper Parker, Cord Nolan, Braeden Presley and Brooks Dixon. ... Moore's uniform colors made recognition of the player's numbers a difficult task. ... Offensively, Bixby was led by Braeden Presley's 75 yards rushing on three carries while freshman Brian "BJ" Jones rambled 62 yards on five carries. Ten Spartans carried the ball. Blake Hogshooter had another successful outing, catching four passes for 154 yards and one touchdown. Catcher DeHart caught three passes for 42 yards. Hogshooter has caught 23 passes for 390 yards and three TDs this season. ... Moore won the time of possession battle 34:17 to 17:42. ... Bixby's defense was credited with four and a half sacks while intercepting two passes and recovering a fumble. ... Bixby is averaging 39.2 points per game while giving up 18.2 points per game. The Spartans are averaging 243.6 passing yards per game while averaging 233 rushing yards per outing.

**'D' PRODUCTIVE** – Bixby's defense limited Moore to 247 yards of total offense – 158 yards passing. The Spartan defenders turned in numerous big plays by several players in turning back early Lion threats. "I thought the defense played really well ... their quarterback and tailback are good. Of course, it hurt then when No. 3 (Maverick Garner) got hurt from the get-go. He was their back-up quarterback," Coach Montgomery said. "They are explosive."

Tyler Wright was credited with 14 tackles, including six solo stops while Cord Nolan had 11 tackles, seven solo stops and three tackles for loss. Cooper Parker ended with seven solo tackles. Making his

presence known at Moore was 6-1, 256-pound junior defensive lineman Joe Peters, who was credited with four tackles, three solo stops and two tackles for loss.

This season, Nolan leads in tackles with 44 followed by Dixon with 40 and Parker with 38. Wright and junior Trey McGlothlin each have 27 total tackles.

Brooks Dixon and Nathan Hobbs each intercepted passes at Moore giving the Spartans five pass interceptions on the season. Hobbs was also credited with a fumble recovery and Dixon with a caused fumble.

**SPECIAL TEAMERS** – Bixby is benefiting this season by the kicking of 5-10, 205-pound junior kicker Bradley Tao and in recent weeks by the unorthodox punting by 5-8, 152-pound junior Nathan Gonzales. Tao continued his clean extra point and kickoff duties last week at Moore. On the season, he's 22-of-22 on extra point attempts while yet to try a field goal. He is also averaging 57.6 yards on 33 kickoffs, sending the majority deep into the end zone.

Tao has steadily improved during his first season playing football after previously competing in soccer. It's been an adjustment.

"Ever since the Owasso game, which the atmosphere was different than it is in soccer, I've really gotten more comfortable," Tao said afterward at Moore. "The second game was better than the first.

"The previous kicker Troy (Nguyen) told me I should go kick and his dad Long also told me I should go kick. They said I had a pretty strong leg.

"I asked Troy to contact coach Suffel (Trevor, special teams coach) to tell him I wanted to kick. Pretty much every day this summer I was out there kicking and working on it. I've just always been good at kicking because my leg was strong and in football it's just getting stronger," he added.

Gonzales has taken over the punting role and responded by averaging 38.7 yards a punt on 12 attempts. He has a long punt of 55 yards. Gonzales keeps the opponents from sending too many people back to block as he runs with the ball before punting it away.

**OPPONENTS** – Results of Bixby's 2024 opponents last Friday were Owasso (5-0) rolling 48-14 at Tulsa Union, Sand Springs (3-2) dominating 68-7 at Oklahoma City Capitol Hill, Putnam City falling 54-14 at Choctaw (3-2), Mustang (4-1, 0-1) holding on for a 33-32 win at Enid (2-3, 0-2) and Norman (4-1, 1-1) dropping a 33-12 decision at Jenks (2-3, 1-1).

In District 1 games Friday (Oct. 11), Jenks visits Mustang and Deer Creek hosts Moore while Enid travels to Norman on Thursday (Oct. 10).

## **BIXBY 49, MOORE 7**

### **First Quarter**

BHS – Nathan Gonzales 18 pass from Carson Kirby (Bradley Tao kick), 2:57

BHS – Kirby 17 run (run failed), 0:19

### **Second Quarter**

BHS – Blake Hogshooter 55 pass from Braeden Presley (Cooper Parker run), 7:23

### **Third Quarter**

BHS – Bode Cairl 3 run (Tao kick), 12:00

BHS – Presley 62 run (Tao kick), 4:52

MHS – Malikai Miller 22 run (Grey Evans kick), 2:36

### **Fourth Quarter**

BHS – Tyler Wright 23 run (Tao kick), 11:36

BHS – Gabe Blankenship 2 run (Tao kick), 4:39