

Pilot Point vs. Aubrey

While our biggest goal for the 2009 season was still weeks away from being checked off our list, we had a chance to check one off this coming Friday night, and the script couldn't have been written any better. G.A. Moore retired from Pilot Point following the 2004 season after a playoff loss to Breckenridge and head coach Blake Feldt. As we all know Coach Feldt would leave Breckenridge after that season to replace coach Moore as the new head coach in Pilot Point. Coach Moore came out of retirement for the 2009 season to coach our HWY 377 rival, The Aubrey Chaparrals. We would be hosting G.A. Moore and his Aubrey Chaparrals on Friday night at Massey Stadium for the district championship and the towns were buzzing. It would be the first time G.A. returned to Massey as the coach of a team other than Pilot Point since 2001 and he had turned around the Aubrey football team from a 5-5 team in 2008 to a 9-0 team coming into this Friday night's game. Aubrey was dominating teams outscoring their opponents by an average score of 44-3. Aubrey had only allowed 28 points through their first 9 games and had posted 6 shutouts. We had an eye on them all year, but it wasn't until they beat Callisburg 34-14 that we started to think they might be for-real.

The Monday before the game the town was buzzing. Friday night was all anyone wanted to talk about. Everywhere you went it was, Pilot Point vs. Aubrey, G.A. vs. Feldt, Aubrey's 10-1 defense vs. the explosive Pilot Point Spread offense. A lot of the old timers in town were very conflicted being they always supported their hometown team, but G.A. was at the heart of many of the glory days of Pilot Point's football program which added to the allure of the game. This matchup was not just the highlight of these two small towns but was drawing area and state-wide attention. It was clear that the 2,500-seating capacity of Massey Stadium was not going to be enough. It was the week before the game that the administration building decided to order temporary

seating to be delivered and installed for an additional 2,500 people. I drove by Massey after practice Wednesday night and saw the added stands. That is when I realized exactly how much attention this game was getting. I started to think to myself “is there something I’m missing? This is the same team we’ve been playing since pee wee. These are the same kids we’ve been beating for the last 8+ years... Right? Am I missing something?”

That week of practice definitely saw an increase in intensity. The district championship was on the line and Aubrey’s defense presented problems. Coach Feldt spent the last few weeks pondering what we could do up front to counter all the movement and chaos that Aubrey presented with their 10-1 defense. Sunday afternoon when the coaches met to develop the game plan for the week, it came to him. Aubrey presented two main problems. 1. Their defensive line would basically try to dive through gaps to keep the offensive line from getting to the second level on their blocks. It allowed the Linebackers to run freely and make tackles. 2. They were in a constant state of motion pre-snap. They would be clapping, moving and running around the line of scrimmage, but they would take a long time to get set. So, the plan was simple. The offensive line would eliminate our splits and line up basically foot-to-foot, which would eliminate the Aubrey defensive line’s ability to shoot the gaps. When we wanted to run to the outside, we would seal off all the chaos to the inside and use a lead back to kick-out the defensive end and it would always leave a crease to run through. When we wanted to run to the inside, the offensive line would all cave down like a QB sneak (*basically*) and the ball would come right behind us under the wide ends and if the wide ends started to collapse too hard, we would run the counter and pin them inside. It was perfect to stop problem #1 Aubrey presented. Problem #2 was a pretty simple fix; tempo. We would break the huddle, sprint to the line of scrimmage and snap the ball before Aubrey could get set. After all, we were all just blocking like one giant wall. The more of a mess Aubrey’s defense was when we snapped the ball, the easier it would be to seal them all

inside. Defensively it was a little simpler. Gap discipline and physicality would stop their full-house rushing attack. Aubrey employed lots of quick handoffs and lots of fakes. If we just stayed disciplined and everyone did their job, we would stop the run. In the passing game Aubrey was very simple. So simple, in fact, defensive coordinator, Kurtis Kloiber, basically picked up through film study that Aubrey would only run a few route combos and those combos would only come out of certain sets. So, if there was a pass play coming out of a certain formation, it could only be a certain route combo. The game plan was set and coach Feldt had never been so certain that a game plan was going to work in all his coaching career. This kind of preparation *almost* took all the nerves of the game away. He was ready for Friday night.

I arrived at the fieldhouse early Friday morning and the place was buzzing. Everyone was so full of excitement. I really believed something that set our team apart from a lot of teams was we were conditioned for these moments. The bigger the moment, the bigger we would play. There was no moment too big for us and this was by far the biggest moment of the year. I had open campus for lunch and needed to get out of there. You could've asked me to tell you one thing from classes that morning and you would've just gotten a blank stare from me. I couldn't think of anything except what that night would bring. I wasn't nervous in the least, but I had some anxiety for the game to just get here. So, I decided to drive by Massey Stadium to just look at it for what I thought would be the last time before we arrived that night to play. When I drove by shortly after noon, I found multiple tents set up with people tailgating!!! I could not believe that there would be people outside of a 2A football stadium tailgating 7 hours before a game on a Friday. It raised my excitement level and made afternoon classes that much harder to suffer through! After the pep rally coach Feldt gave us 30-45 minutes to leave campus to get food or whatever we needed before returning to campus to get focused for the game. I had to make one more trip to Massey to see what it was like. At 3:15pm (4 hours and 15 minutes before game time) along with the tailgaters, there was

a line that stretched from the entrance gate across the road into the middle school parking lot. I got the biggest smile on my face and couldn't get over how nuts this was. I returned to the fieldhouse and the word had already spread to the players about the scene at Massey. We were all ready to get going right then and there. I normally napped during our down time at the fieldhouse, but not today. I was too amped up to sleep. I just paced the halls and the weight room waiting to load up on the bus.

Like a normal home game, we loaded the bus to leave the high school to head to Massey around 5:15pm. When we'd arrive, the stadium would be mostly empty. Maybe a few cheerleaders hanging signs or a few overzealous parents getting their spots, but this was not a normal home game. When we arrived at the stadium the lights were on and the permanent stands on both the home and visiting side were already filled to capacity. We would normally just unload the bus and head straight into the locker room and wait until it was our group's turn to take the field, but as we all saw the scene we were entering, coach Feldt told everyone to go take their stuff into the locker room and go out onto the field to soak it in. The energy was palpable, and the place was electric. When we took the field someone in the press box started playing *Welcome to the Jungle* by Guns N' Roses. The home stands erupted when we came out. Everyone was standing and yelling like we just scored the game winning TD when they saw us. A few of the guys that graduated in '08 were there in the front row in full body paint supporting us as well. I had never felt that sort of energy flow through my veins and the entire team ate it up. We all were on the field full of energy getting loose and soaking it all in. Since then, many people in the stand have told me that when we took the field, they knew we were ready. We were out there moving around looking like we owned the place. We did. It was our home and we were going to defend it tonight. Shortly after we retreated back into the fieldhouse, the Aubrey team was marched through the parking lot, through the home stands out onto the field. From all accounts I've heard, they looked the exact

opposite of us. They looked tight and nervous. Many have said it looked like the moment was too big. As their fans filled out the visitor's side, cheering them on; the home side was letting them know they weren't in friendly territory. When we came out for warm-ups all the temporary seating had filled up and some fans from the visiting side (mostly students) were allowed to move down and sit on the track. You could see the fence around the south endzone was starting to fill up as well. This was the sort of atmosphere our team lived for. We couldn't wait to be unleashed.

We were set to receive the opening kick and the place was a mad house. Both sides were going crazy and I remember looking at Will Allen, who was identifying who "O" was to the rest of the return unit to set up their blocks off of. I don't think anyone of them could hear a single thing and right as Aubrey broke the huddle to kick the ball off the bells from the AC/DC song *Hells Bells* starting ringing through the stadium PA system. I'm surprised my head didn't explode I was so jacked up. We had a short return on the kickoff, and it was time to get the show started. The first play of the game we lined up with our running back Jarman Johnson at quarterback in a sort of wildcat set up. Jarman's cadence for the snap was off from what we were used to and with the noise of the crowd the first play was a dud. It probably should have been a false start as few of us moved before the ball was snapped which caused some penetration because we didn't all move as a unit and we lost 2 yards. I'm sure that got Aubrey fired up because they just stopped Jarman Johnson for negative 2-yards on the first play. Coach Feldt threw out all the gimmick plays right then and there and said we're just going to whip them the old fashion way. He was going to let his game plan and our execution do the talking. On the 5th play of the game, we ran a counter to the right side and Jarman busted the first big play of the night with a 61-yard touchdown run to get us on the board. Aubrey's style creates a lot of congestion around the line of scrimmage but with our o-line sealing it all inside and our backs vision, we were on the board early. Aubrey got their first drive going and had racked up a

few first downs all on the ground when our defense forced a 3rd and 8 and an obvious passing down. Wurster dropped back to pass and our defense was blanketed all over their receivers... Almost like they knew what was coming... Wurster thought he saw an opening and tried to force a pass in when safety Justin Chambers came flying across and intercepted him. We came out on offense and had already flexed the big play muscle, and now we wanted to flex our ball control, wear you down offense. We hammered out a 13 play, seven-minute drive where Jarman punched the ball in on a 13-yard touchdown run. Our defense followed that drive out by forcing an Aubrey 3-and-out finished by a sack by outside linebacker Austin Balderas. We wasted no time by scoring on the second play with a 40-yard TD run by QB Seth Tilley. The game plan was working flawlessly. Aubrey wasn't creating the type of chaos behind the line of scrimmage they were accustomed to. Our tempo was causing problems for them and it became visible when there were multiple plays where there wouldn't be a single Aubrey defender within 3 yards of the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball. We were catching them out of position, and it was making them easy to seal to the inside. The Aubrey offense came out again and they had gained a first down and were facing a 3rd and 1 when they decided to try and run a play-action pass. Defensive end Carter Street was not fooled and about the time Wurster turned around to look for a receiver, Carter was in his face and brought him down forcing another Aubrey Punt. The punt pinned us down around the 15-yardline with about 4 minutes to go in the half. We had plenty of time and called a pretty balanced drive with an equal mix of run and pass and with 28 seconds left in the first half Seth Tilley connected with Mason Guthrie on a 17-yard touchdown pass. Aubrey and their fans were shell shocked. They had only seen 28 points scored on their defense over 36 quarters and it only took us 2 to do the same. Aubrey tried to get a last second score before half after a really good kick return, but the drive was ended after Tyler McNairy intercepted another Wurster pass. We went into halftime up 28-0.

In the second half Aubrey came out and showed they were a tough team and they weren't going to quit. They took the opening half kickoff and put together a long touchdown drive to start the second half. They punched it in on the end of a long drive with a 1-yard run by Billy Feathers. Things got interesting on the ensuing kickoff when Aubrey kicked it and it landed between two of our players and by the time, they realized it Aubrey had jumped on the ball. They had new life. Their fans were into it again and they had the ball at Pilot Point's 20-yardline. Just a few plays later Aubrey had the ball 1st and goal from the 8-yardline. This could be their chance. After gaining 3 yards on the next 3 plays they were faced with a 4th and goal from the 5-yardline. They drew up a neat little bootleg and rolled out right and had a guy with a little separation in the corner of the endzone but couldn't complete the pass. They wasted their chance with a turnover on downs. We took over at our own 5-yardline and had a great drive going. We had a 2nd and 8 at our own 40 when Jarman broke a 30-yard run to set us up at Aubrey's 30, but it was called back for a hold. We had to settle for a punt. Aubrey had another chance to cut the deficit, but on the 2nd play Justin Chambers collected his second interception of the game and our 3rd overall on defense. This time we would cash in a few minutes into the 4th quarter with a 19-yard touchdown run to bring the lead to 35-7. Aubrey tried to mount a drive and were faced with a 4th and 5 when Wurster threw his 4th INT of the game to linebacker Jeremy Jackson and that all but iced the game. We killed some clock and had a turnover on downs and Aubrey pounded out a garbage time touchdown on a 3-yard run by Wurster and the game was over.

Aubrey was a good football team who showed toughness and would go on to have a successful playoff run, but when it was all over, the game plans worked to a T, and in the words of former NFL coach Dennis Green, "They are what we thought they were." A good team, but not as good as us. As time was running out the cheerleaders unrolled a sign in the North endzone that said "That Feldt good, but we expected Moore from you". Everyone involved respected the heck out

of coach G.A. and we all knew what he accomplished in his career. And heck! Look at what he just did at Aubrey. He turned a 5-5 team into a 9-1 team that would go all the way into the quarterfinals with essentially, the same team. A lot of us thought it was a funny little pun and was meant as a fun little jab at a rival team, not a personal attack, but not everyone thought it was as clever as we did. We all know how small town stories go, but there is even a little story about how earlier in the week there was a conversation in a coffee shop with people from Pilot Point talking about how Aubrey was going to come in here and whoop us; They said G.A. was going to show us what that old school football was all about. Then a different former Pilot Point head football coach who happened to be there chimed in and tried to bet everyone there \$1,000 that Pilot Point would beat Aubrey that coming week. While we didn't hear that story until well after the fact, most of us who'd been in town for a long time definitely felt like we were chasing ghosts of teams past and that win definitely gave us a little validation that we were legitimate and we were going to win the State Championship.

Saturday Morning rolled around and Coach Feldt gave us the weekend off to celebrate our 10-0 regular season and district championship. But come Monday it would be time to start the 3rd part, and most important part of our season, and it would start with the storied rivalry and '08 rematch against the Boyd Yellow Jackets.

THE GAME AT A GLANCE

Pilot Point 35, Aubrey 14

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| Aubrey | 0 | 0 | 7 | 7 | — | 14 |
| Pilot Point | 7 | 21 | 0 | 7 | — | 35 |

First Quarter

PP — Jarman Johnson 61 run (Ruben Martinez kick), 9:31

Second Quarter

PP — Johnson 13 run (Martinez kick), 10:58

PP — Seth Tilley 40 run (Martinez kick), 8:00

PP — Mason Guthrie 17 pass from Tilley (Martinez kick), 0:28

Third Quarter

A — Feathers 1 run (Birdsong kick), 7:15

Fourth Quarter

PP — Johnson 19 run (Martinez kick), 8:22

A — James Wurster 3 run (Birdsong kick), 3:10

THE YARDSTICK

| | A | PP |
|----------------|--------|--------|
| First Downs | 12 | 23 |
| Rushes-Yds. | 41-151 | 41-357 |
| Passing Yds. | 33 | 57 |
| Comp-Att-Int | 2-13-4 | 7-10-0 |
| Punts | 2-44 | 1-41 |
| Fumbles-lost | 2-0 | 1-1 |
| Penalties-Yds. | 1-5 | 4-50 |

Individual Statistics

Rushing — Aubrey, Billy Feathers 23-128, Skylar Craig 5-9, Jordan Starling 2-6, Taylor Conway 1-4, Kaleb Parrent 1-3, Chase Mahurin 3-1, Wurster 6-0. Pilot Point, Johnson 28-247, Tilley 13-110.

Passing — Aubrey, Wurster 2-13-4 33. Pilot Point, Tilley 7-10-0 57.

Receiving — Aubrey, Birdsong 1-25, Kendall Jones 1-8. Pilot Point, Justin Chambers 2-18, Guthrie 1-17, Johnson 2-13, Colin Noe 1-5, J.P. Price 1-4.