

Round 2: Pilot Point vs. Gunter

A win is a win in the Texas high school football playoffs, but the round 1 rematch with Boyd was a little closer than we had hoped. I don't know why we expected any different after they pushed us to the limits in 2008. It seemed almost like De Ja Vu when round 2 brought us another rematch from 2008's playoff with a match-up against the Gunter Tigers. We would hope to escape this week with a win and without all the drama that unfolded in the '08 victory.

In 2008 We suffered 3 injuries to starters on the offense in the first round against Boyd. Our starting Center was out with a partially torn MCL, I was out with a high ankle sprain, and more importantly, or QB Seth Tilley was hindered by a foot sprain. He went from a 4.7 40-yard guy to a 5.7 40-yard guy from one week to the next. With all that, a stout Gunter Tigers defense was going to cause problems. That showed out in the game when Gunter held our offense to 1 TD on the night. Jarman Johnson had a 67-yard interception return that was a big part of us holding a 15-13 lead in the closing minutes of the ball game. Gunter had decided to use their ball control offense to kill the clock and had the ball well within their kickers field goal range to win the game. It almost seemed like inevitable defeat for us. Gunter only needed a few more carries to get the clock down, but then they handed the ball off on the left side to their big running back Chad Tucker who just put his head down to try and barrel forward for a few guys. Outside linebacker Austin Balderas saw his opportunity and instead of wrapping his arms around Tucker for the tackle, he wrapped his arms around the

ball and as Tucker spun right to break Balderas' grip, Balderas spun left and came away with the football. Gunter had done a good job of killing the clock for us and we ran 1 play for a first down, then took 2 knees to complete the win.

The game in 2008 was a classic and was really fitting for who Gunter is and what we could look forward to in 2009. Gunter's identity is to do everything they do physically. They played a wing-T style power run offense. They play a very physical, technically sound defense. They sprint to the ball and go all out on every play like it's a 4th and 1. Most importantly is they are very disciplined, and they do not beat themselves. If we wanted to beat them, they were going to make us earn it.

The match-up would be our last Friday night lights match-up of the season. It would take place at Frisco Memorial stadium, and we liked that because we had always heard that Pilot Point fared well in that stadium. We came in 11-0 district champions with a win over Boyd and Gunter came in as 11-0 district champions with a win over Boyd. We knew Gunter would have revenge on their mind, especially running back Chad Tucker who had the costly fumble in 2008. We had to bring our A-game.

We knew going in this had the chance to be an old school, knockdown, drag it out style football game, which was the exact opposite of the game we played last week. So, after only scoring 1 offensive TD in '08 we were anxious to get off to a good start and we did. We took the opening drive down the field and scored a TD on a jet sweep. We had almost exclusively run that play with Jarman Johnson throughout the year, but we showed a new wrinkle this week and ran it with wide receiver

JP Price and he capitalized with a 9-yard TD run to get us on the board first. The defense was hoping to rebound from a rough week against Boyd. They had tweaked our defense in a way we hadn't done all season. We started out the season by running an "Odd" style front, which was basically a 3-4, but due to injuries we had to switch to a 4-3 defense, and we ran that all year. Going into the week we remembered how much trouble our "odd" front gave Gunter in our scrimmage at the beginning of the year, so we decided to add that to our defensive game plan this week, but it did not get off to the start that they had hoped. Running back Chad Tucker finished a long, tough first drive for Gunter with a 2-yard touchdown run. After both teams had traded scores to open the game you could see both defenses settle-in. The ball became much harder to move for both sides. After exchanging a few punts our defense forced a fumble in the second quarter and we jumped on it. We knew we had to take advantage of our opportunity and that we did. We were able to add a TD on a 4-yard run by Jarman Johnson. This game was unfolding totally different from the week before. Offense was tough to come by and we entered the half with a 14-7 lead. The defense kept up the pressure and both teams were held scoreless in the 3rd quarter. When the 4th quarter came around, it was time to flex what made us unique for a 2A football team. We were in incredible shape and we had 22 different starters for our Offense and Defense. As hard as Gunter was playing, they couldn't afford the same luxury. They just didn't have the horses to run with us for 4 quarters. You could see they worked hard and had no quit in them, but we took it to the next level in the quarter where champions are

made. We scored on a 33-yard run by Jarman Johnson to expand our lead to 21-7 and Gunter knew that they were in trouble. You can't help but respect the hell out of Gunter though because quit was nowhere in that team's DNA. Similarly, to us pulling something out we hadn't used all year on defense, Gunter came out on offense in a spread, shotgun formation. They hadn't done that all year. It was a good scheme for them, and we weren't quite prepared for it. They ended up taking it down the field and scored a touchdown on a 16-yard catch by Chad Tucker. Gunter was now down 21-14 and they attempted an onside kick, but we were prepared, and we recovered it. Gunter was desperate and had to try and be more aggressive than usual, which led to some chunk plays by our offense and Seth Tilley drove the final nail in the coffin with 3 minutes to go in the game. Tilley's 15-yard TD run extended the lead to 28-14. During the time the defense spent on the sideline, they were able to make some adjustments and when Gunter came back out in the spread we were prepared and shut it down. The game came to an end and we came out with a hard fought 28-14 win. Just another game that would add to our battle tested, unwavering confidence that we would win it all.

Gunter was the ideal 2A football team. They were talented, tough football team that refused to quit, but they had a bunch of kids having to play both ways. We were an anomaly. We had 11 starters on offense and a totally different 11 starters on defense which help us outlast teams like Gunter. When other teams try and do that same thing by using 22 different starters, there are normally obvious holes in their units. That is

what made us different is we didn't have those holes. All those things made us rare, but not one of a kind. Coming up in the 3rd round we would face against a team that was almost the mirror image of ourselves. The Godley Wildcats.

THE GAME AT A GLANCE

Pilot Point 28
Gunter 14

Pilot Point	7	7	0	14	—	28
Gunter	7	0	0	7	—	14

First Quarter

PP — J.P. Price 9 run (Ruben Martinez kick)

G — Chad Tucker 2 run (Dalton Lee kick)

Second Quarter

PP — Jarman Johnson 4 run (Martinez kick)

Third Quarter

No scoring

Fourth Quarter

PP — Johnson 33 run (Martinez kick)

G — Tucker 16 pass from Richard Young (Lee kick)

PP — Seth Tilley 15 run (Martinez kick)

THE YARDSTICK

	PP	G
First Downs	17	17
Rushes-Yds.	40-293	44-182
Passing Yds.	69	81
Comp-Att-Int	8-14-1	6-16-1
Punts	4-35.8	2-46.5
Fumbles-lost	3-0	4-1
Penalties-Yds.	9-90	2-20

Individual Statistics

Rushing — Pilot Point, Johnson 15-115, Tilley 22-167, Price 1-9, Jeremy Jackson 1-2, Justin Chambers 1-0. Gunter, Tucker 25-98, Nicky Mixon 17-90, Young 1-0, Price Ferrell 1-(-)6.

Passing — Pilot Point, Tilley 8-14-1 69. Gunter, Young 6-15-1 98, Tucker 0-1-0 0.

Receiving — Pilot Point, Colin Noe 3-33, Johnson 2-4, Tyler McNairy 1-18, Price 1-7, Austin Balderas 1-6. Gunter, A.J. Phillips 3-45, Leo Castorena 1-7, Tucker 1-16, Lww 1-13.