

Round 4: Pilot Point vs. Brady

When we woke up Sunday morning after defeating Godley all the excitement was gone. We all knew our star running back Jarman Johnson and starting safety Willie Davis were going to lose their dad soon, but it finally happened. We went from the highest high, to the lowest low over night. Our group of football players were closer than any group I had ever seen or been a part of so seeing two of our brothers going through this was going to make for a tough week. That Sunday afternoon I drove over to Jarman and Willie's house and there were so many people there showing support. The entire family was over there and I was just one of many people that swung by to show my support for my brothers. Many of our teammates came by at one point or another to show some love.

That week of preparation was like a blur to me know. At this point of the season we had dialed practice back physically, and we were really focused on our mental preparation. Jarman and Willie were at all the practices. They both seemed pretty focused at practice. It seemed like they were using practice as a get-a-way from what was going on at home. Outside of practice Jarman seemed to be holding up pretty well and, while not as much as usual, we still did see that big smile and infectious laugh from time to time. Willie on the other hand was having a real hard time with the loss. Late in the week someone had brought us a box that had round stickers for our helmets that had the initials "HMD" in them in big red letters. Everyone added it to their helmet, and we dedicated the final 2 games to the memory of Jarman and Willies dad.

The day of the funeral came, and the players were able to get out of school. We all got on a school bus and drove over to Celina for the funeral. The church was packed with people showing their support. A ton of family members came up to us and thanked us for being here and told us how much Henry loved watching us play and how much us being there would mean to Jarman and Willie. The hardest moment came at the end of the funeral when it came to the final viewing. Jarman had held up incredibly well throughout the week but the emotions of losing his dad were finally coming out in this moment. It made it that much real for us all and we wanted to play the best we could for Jarman and Willie.

Saturday was here and it was time to bus to Stephenville to play at Tarleton State University. Earlier that week coach Feldt stepped into the locker room and asked if we wanted to take charter busses to the game and everyone in unison

yelled “NO!” before he could even get the entire question out of his mouth. We had heard there was a curse on taking charter busses and whether or not that was true, we had taken charter busses to the Muleshoe game the year before. So, we were taking the yellow dogs to Stephenville. To do it in comfort coach Feldt got us like 4 busses for the group. It allowed us to all have 2 seats to ourselves to stretch out on the long drive. When we got there all the non-football stuff was forgotten for a little while. The atmosphere was that of a big football game. Tailgates were already going and there were fans there cheering our arrival. We embraced the warm welcome and headed in the locker room to wait for kickoff. The locker room was a very calm place. Everyone was doing their routine to get focused and there wasn't a doubt we were going to take care of business.

Brady was another wing-T triple option type team. They had good running backs and a physical offensive line, but their star was their quarterback Mackenzie Hirt. Pilot Point has a history of shutting down these offenses and we would need to continue that today. They took the ball first and after moving the ball for a few first downs, they were forced to punt. We got the ball on our own 30-yardline. On the first play we ran a QB keeper and Seth Tilley gained 4-yards. Second down was a called run for Jarman. Jarman entered this game 60-yards away from breaking the Pilot Point career rushing record. He had told me we would break that on his first carry if we were further than 60-yards from the endzone. Well here was his chance. 2nd and 6 , 66-yards from the endzone. The ball was snapped and Jarman got the ball. There was a missed assignment by someone and Jarman was immediately faced with a defender as soon as he got his hands on the football, but Jarman was determined. Jarman gave the defender a nasty stiff-arm to the face and threw the defender to the ground. Everyone on the offense had found someone to block and Jarman took it 66-yards to the house on his first carry after his dad passed away. I remember sprinting down the field and being so pumped. I don't think I had ever been this excited for a touchdown. Jarman did what he said he would do, and he was now the career rushing yard record holder for Pilot Point, and we were up 7-0. Brady came out looking to answer our score but instead, ended up fumbling and we jumped on the ball to take possession. We capitalized on the opportunity and once again Jarman found the endzone on a 22-yard TD run with 2:08 left in the 1st quarter. Brady then made another huge mistake and fumbled on the kickoff. We recovered and had it 1st and 10 from the Brady 32 with a chance to go up 21-0. We wasted no time and Seth Tilley threw a 32-yard TD to Gareth Gengenbach to extend the lead. That was also a new school record for TD passes in a season by a PP QB. That was Seth's 21st TD pass of the

season. 1:57 seconds left in the 1st quarter we had a 21-0 lead. I went back to the sideline after that TD and our stands were going crazy and we might have gotten a little ahead of ourselves on the sideline as well. I asked O-line coach, Coach Allen "What round is this!?" We knew Godley would probably be our toughest test, but we didn't expect it to be this easy. Brady was a good team and they had never been in a big game like this. It took them a quarter to settle in and unfortunately for them when they did settle in, they were down 21 points. The next drive they finally settled down. They took the ball and drove it the down for a long TD drive to answer our 21 points with their 1st score of the day on a 1-yard TD run by QB Mackenzie Hirt. Midway through the 2nd quarter we had a 21-7 lead. Both teams ended the half with a few punts, and we entered halftime with a commanding 21-7 lead.

We got the ball to start the 2nd half and it didn't go the way we had hoped. We had to punt, and it gave Brady a chance to get back in the game. QB Hirt took advantage of the opportunity and added another 1-yard TD run and cut the deficit down to 21-14. At this point we hadn't scored in a while and were back in a game. In big games, when you need big plays, you go to your big players. Jarman got us back on the board with his 3rd TD of the day with a 65-yard TD run. Late in the 3rd quarter we had extended our lead to 28-14. At this point in the game it was becoming clear that Hirt was getting exhausted. Our defense was harassing him every play. If he kept the ball, we hit him. If he handed it off or pitched it, we hit him. Our defense was chasing him sideline to sideline and he was showing that it was wearing him down. Our defense was letting him know about it too. One play in the early part of the 4th quarter our defense chased him out of bounds on our side and you could see the fatigue in his eyes. He was done. We added another TD on a 19-yard pass from Seth Tilley to WR Austin Balderas. The game had come to an end and we had won 35-14. Jarman had himself a day with 250 yards rushing and 3 TD's. He was a superstar and to do it the week his dad passed away was amazing.

After the game was over was a different experience than anything we had had that year. It was the realization that we were in the state championship game. It was something we had talked about and planned on. Anything less would have been a disappointment to us, but it was different now because we were actually there. It was the only thing we hadn't experienced yet. We let ourselves celebrate this one on the bus ride home, but we all knew once Saturday ended, it was time to get ready for whoever the opponent would be next week.

That night was a relaxing one. I was spending it at some friend's house watching Texas beat Nebraska in the Big-12 championship. Towards the end of the game someone looked up the score of the other semi-final game to see who we would be playing. They said it looked like Kirbyville was going back to the state championship game after losing to Muleshoe in '08. The guy reading it gasped when he saw the score. Kirbyville had won their state semi-final game 60-7. I knew that they would be a challenge because they were clearly a great team, and they had been in plenty of big games. This should be a good one.

THE GAME AT A GLANCE

**Pilot Point 35
Brady 14**

Brady 0 7 7 0 — 14
Pilot Point 21 0 7 7 — 35

First Quarter

PP — Jarman Johnson 66 run (Ruben Martinez kick), 6:28

PP — Johnson 22 run (Martinez kick), 2:08

PP — Gareth Gengenbach 32 pass from Seth Tilley (Martinez kick), 1:57

Second Quarter

B — Mackenzie Hirt 1 run (Xander Leathergood kick), 10:47

Third Quarter

B — Mackenzie Hirt 1 run (Xander Leathergood kick), 4:16

PP — Johnson 85 run (Martinez kick), 2:16

Fourth Quarter

PP — Balderas 19 pass from Tilley (Martinez kick), 10:00

THE YARDSTICK

	B	PP
First Downs	16	15
Rushes-Yds.	46-177	32-260
Passing Yds.	137	104
Comp-Att-Int	13-21-0	10-14-1
Punts	2-34	3-39
Fumbles-lost	2-2	1-0
Penalties-Yds.	1-5	4-57

Individual Statistics

Rushing — Brady, Hirt 24-74, Jake Long 10-42, Andrew Brooks 4-29, Jose Ramirez 3-18, Seth Bozeman 6-14. Pilot Point, Johnson 26-249, Tilley 6-11.

Passing — Brady, Hirt 12-20-0 137 yards. Pilot Point, Tilley 10-14-1 104 yards.

Receiving — Brady, Kyle Andrews 4-65, Toby Sopher 5-38, Bozeman 1-13, Ramirez 1-13, Zach Jones 2-10. Pilot Point, Gengenbach 2-40, Balderas 2-26, Aaron Buckingham 2-17, Johnson 1-11, J.P. Price 1-7, Collin Noe 2-3.