

Eric Schmid guides The Woodlands to 16-7 victory over Klein Oak; Austin Westlake next for Highlanders



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By Jim Mashek

SHENANDOAH — The Woodlands took the fight to the Klein Oak Panthers on Friday night, and this time, the Highlanders will live to tell about it.

The Woodlands used a brilliant effort from junior quarterback Eric Schmid and a typically sturdy performance from its defense to turn back the Panthers 16-7 on a chilly night at Woodforest Bank Stadium.

The Highlanders took Klein Oak's best shot and avenged last year's 38-20 loss to the Panthers at Klein Memorial Stadium.

The Woodlands (10-1) advanced to the area round of the Region II-6A Division I playoffs and will face Austin Westlake (10-1) in a Saturday afternoon game on November 21. The Highlanders will face Westlake at 3 p.m. on that date at Bryan High School's Merrill Green Stadium. Klein Oak finished its season at 6-5.

Eric Schmid, the son of veteran TWHS coach Mark Schmid, missed the Highlanders' final regular-season game, a 21-18 victory over Kingwood on November 5 at Humble's Turner Stadium.

But Eric Schmid was back and he was clearly ready to play against the Panthers after missing the Kingwood game with an injured left elbow. "I wasn't sure, early in the week," Eric Schmid said. "But I was practicing, and I felt great. "I played it safe. I went down when I had to."

Schmid passed sparingly against the Panthers, but it was his threat to run the ball that might have been the difference. At least that was the observation of Klein Oak coach David Smith when it was over.

"Our defense played very well," Smith said. "We executed pretty well on offense, but we just couldn't score when we had the chance. Their defense is very good. "Eric Schmid did a great job ... Eric's the difference."

Senior TWHS offensive lineman Justin Robbennolt thought the Highlanders' preparation might have been the difference.

"I think we prepared for this game a lot better than we did last year," Robbennolt said. "We knew it was going to be a tough matchup. They've got a lot of good athletes."

And a lot of size. The Panthers have a big, strong offensive line and several hulking defenders, like linemen Cody Gardner and Kane Patrick.

"They're big, and they're athletic," Mark Schmid said. "Anytime you play anyone from that district (District 15-6A, which swept its 16-6A counterparts in bi-district play last season), you're in for a war. "Every time we needed our defense to make a play, they were able to shut them down."

The Highlanders bolted to a 10-0 lead in the early going, but Klein Oak was like a coy but aging prizefighter, waiting for its shot to get back in the game. The Panthers got that opportunity midway through the third quarter.

Backup quarterback Cameron Olson got the Panthers going with some deft fakes and outside running, taking Klein Oak quickly downfield before teammate Bennie Smith scaled the pile for a 1-yard touchdown run with 6:29 left in the third quarter.

"(Olson) is faster than he looks and a really good athlete," Mark Schmid said.

Eric Schmid had a 5-yard touchdown run wiped out by two penalties against the Highlanders, but the TWHS junior then converted a third-and-goal play from the Klein Oak 15-yard line.

Schmid rolled out to his right and bought some time before floating a 15-yard touchdown pass to Reed Barber with 1:21 left in the third quarter. After that, the Klein Oak offense was largely out of sorts.

TWHS cornerback Connor Binney came up with an interception at the Highlanders' 23-yard line, and outside linebacker Zach La Canfora had a third-down sack on the Panthers' penultimate possession.

Jordan Talford led the Highlanders with 109 yards rushing on 23 carries. Eric Schmid rushed for 81 yards on just 11 carries and completed 5 of 9 passes for 40 yards. Sophomore Kesean Carter gave the Highlanders a lift in the second half, carrying the ball five times for 50 yards.



The Woodlands defeats Klein Oak 16-7, advance in playoffs

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SHENANDOAH, Texas — The Woodlands football team rejoiced as they triumphed over Klein Oak 16-7 in the Bi-District Playoffs.

The game began in the Highlander's favor with an early run for a touchdown by starting quarterback Eric Schmid. An interception for a Highlander first down would be capitalized with a successful field goal by Lucas Veith in the second quarter, bringing the halftime score to 10-0, Highlanders. Klein Oak returned in the third quarter with a touchdown, but the Highlanders answered back with another touchdown, bringing them to what would be their final game score, 16-7.

Schmid, who made huge contributions to the game, returned for the Highlanders after receiving an elbow injury in their game against Summer Creek.

“Eric brings a different dimension to the offense,” Head Coach Mark Schmid said. “He’s able to make things happen with his legs when things go down, and he did that tonight, so it was good to have him back.”

The Highlanders faced Klein Oak for the second year in a row in the bi-district round of playoffs, however, last year, the game did not go as well for them with seven turnovers. This time, Klein Oak had three turnovers on their game record, and The Woodlands were able to capitalize on their opponent’s mistakes. Schmid said Klein Oak comes from one of the best districts in Texas, and they couldn’t afford turnovers at this point in the season.

“These guys knocked us off last year, so we wanted to exact a little revenge and do the same thing to them this year,” Schmid said. “The kids were really focused, and we’re really proud of the way that we showed up to play.”

The Highlanders will play in the next round of playoffs in an afternoon game Saturday, November 21 at Bryan High School. Schmid said he wants his team to treat the playoffs as though it’s an entirely new season.

“We talked about how this was a second season for us. The district run was great, but now we have to ramp it up because everybody that we play are good people,” Schmid said. “They were qualifiers out of their district, so the competition gets stiffer which means we’ve got to get better.”