

The Woodlands takes down Lufkin in offensive showcase



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By **Demetrio Teniente**

SHENANDOAH — Eric Schmid and The Woodlands' offense picked up right where they left off two weeks ago against George Ranch as the senior quarterback torched the Lufkin secondary for 291 passing yards and six touchdowns. Not to be outdone, Lufkin quarterback Kordell Rodgers did everything he could to keep the Panthers within striking distance by putting up 362 passing yards and five touchdowns of his own.

With its offense humming, The Woodlands' defense needed to make just a few stops to pull out the win, and it did. The Highlanders took down Lufkin 63-42 in an offensive showcase on Friday night at Woodforest Bank Stadium.

“It was our first district ball game, so it is always good to get that first win under your belt,” The Woodlands coach Mark Schmid said. “We got that win against a very good team in Lufkin. They are very explosive offensively and have scored a lot of points this season. They did it again to us tonight, but the great thing was that we were able to respond.”

For the most part, it was Lufkin that needed to respond as The Woodlands never trailed. Eric Schmid opened up the scoring with an 18-yard hookup Chris Stewart. The senior wideout caught the pass near the left sideline, took a step inside, made a defender miss, cut it back outside and shrugged off another defender as he pranced into the end zone to give the Highlanders a 7-0 lead with 8:27 left in the first quarter.

The Woodlands (5-0, 1-0) — the No. 1 team in this week's Houston Chronicle/VYPE Class 6A rankings — then forced a three-and-out on Lufkin's first possession, which opened the door for the Highlanders. Erich Schmid orchestrated a four-play, 91-yard drive that culminated in a 49-yard pass to Dylan Casey that made it 14-0 with 5:35 left in the first quarter. It took the Highlanders just 1:23 to drive the length of the field. Lufkin (4-2, 1-1) responded with a seven-play, 75-yard drive, which ended with a 45-yard connection between Rodgers and junior wide out Malik Jackson to make it 14-7.

The Woodlands and Lufkin traded punches the rest of the first half with neither defense able to get a stop. After Lufkin's Kahlil Brown finished a 1-yard run into the end zone to make it 28-21, The Woodlands, with 2:44 left in the half, the Highlanders took over at their own 33-yard line.

Knowing that Lufkin would get the ball to start the second half, The Woodlands marched 67 yards down the field, running eight plays and eating up 2:12 on clock. The drive ended in Eric Schmid finding Grant Murphy in the end zone from 3 yards out for the quarterback's fourth passing touchdown of the night.

"We didn't want them to get the ball before the second half, because we knew they were going to start with it," Mark Schmid said. "We made sure we used as much (clock) as we could. Fortunately, we used up almost all of it and came away with a score."

Still, Mark Schmid knew his defense would need to deliver at least one more stop if they were to come away with the win. "At halftime we talked about how we needed a stop," Mark Schmid said. "The defense stepped up and delivered, and then we went down and scored to make it a three-touchdown game and never looked back. That was the stop we needed, and we got it."

After picking up 19 yards on its first three plays of the second half, Lufkin hit a brick wall, and The Woodlands forced just the second punt of the ball game. A few plays later, The Woodlands tailback Jordan Talford broke free for a 59-yard run and then finished the drive off with a 3-yard touchdown to make it 42-21 with 8:56 left in the third. Talford finished the night with 129 yards and two scores on 12 carries.

Rodgers answered with another passing touchdown, this time an 8-yarder to Jamel Richemond to make it a 14-point game, but the Highlanders could not be stopped. Just 34 seconds later, Carlos Ramos scored on a 20-yard run with 6:27 left in the third quarter.

On its next possession, trailing 49-28, Lufkin went for it on fourth-and-three from its own 36, but Rodgers' pass sailed over his receiver's head and out of bounds. Eric Schmid took advantage of the short field, and he connected with Connor Klapesky from 20 yards out for his fifth passing touchdown of the game to give The Woodlands a 56-28 lead with 3:51 remaining in the third quarter.

Lufkin would go on to score two more times, and the 42 points allowed was the most a Highlander defense has given up since 2013 (56 to Allen). Rodgers threw two more scores in the fourth quarter with a 20-yarder to Breyton Garcia and a 19-yarder to Ja'Tavion Tutt. But it wasn't enough as The Woodlands' offense kept plugging away. The Highlanders answered Rodgers' touchdown to Garcia with a 45-yard bomb from Eric Schmid to Casey to make it 63-35 with 7:31 left to play.

Though it wasn't their usual performance, Mark Schmid knows that it won't be long before his defense is shutting down opponents again. Friday was just the offense's turn to do the heavy lifting. "I know those kids on the defensive side of the ball aren't happy with how many points we gave up," Mark Schmid said. "But this is a team game, and it will go back the other way before you know it."

Lufkin's only stop of the night came on The Woodlands' final drive, which ended with a couple of kneel downs and an incomplete pass on fourth down. "We scored on nine of our 10 possessions, which is great," Mark Schmid said. "Our offense did a great job making big plays, and Eric did a good job decision making, putting the ball where it needed to be. It was really a great night."

Highlanders show offensive power in high-scoring showdown

By WOL Sports

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THE WOODLANDS, Texas - The Woodlands outscored Lufkin 63-42 on Friday in front of a sold-out crowd at Woodforest Stadium. The Woodlands received the opening kickoff and marched down the field, using a mix of passes, runs and quarterback options. In the red zone, QB Eric Schmid hit Chris Stewart for an 18-yard touchdown play. The extra point was good, putting The Woodlands up 7-0.

Michael Tolbet of Lufkin returned the ensuing kickoff to the Panther's 31-yard line. Lufkin's first offensive possession got off to a rocky start with an incomplete pass. The only positive play in their drive involved Kordell Rodgers placing a screen pass into the hands of Lufkin's star player of the night, Malik Jackson, for an eight-yard gain. Lufkin went three-and-out and punted the ball to The Woodlands.

The second drive for The Woodlands was short and sweet, with a 26-yard pass on first down that put TWHS at midfield. With a confident arm, Schmid made a 49-yard throw to Dylan Casey for the second Woodlands touchdown of the night. After the extra point, The Woodlands led 14-0.

Lufkin started their second possession on the 25 yard line. On their second play, Rodgers almost threw an interception to Ethan Bonner followed by a false start. However, going for it on fourth down proved to be worth the gamble. Rodgers threw a 45-yard bomb to Jackson. The score was 14-7.

On The Woodlands' third possession, they put together three passes, seven runs and a quarterback option to go 75 yards. Jordan Talford scored on two-yard run. The Woodlands increased their lead to 21-7.

After an early flag for false start, Lufkin's offense put together a 75-yard scoring drive. Jackson dominated again with 49 yards of offense, scoring on a 35-yard pass. Both offenses looked like well-oiled machines. The score was 21-14.

After a 16-yard kick return, The Woodlands started their fourth possession from their 31 yard line. Schmid made an athletic 14-yard option play on second down to put The Woodlands at midfield. His head remained in the game after a big hit though, and he aired the ball 51 yards down the field to Kesean Carter to score The Woodland's fourth touchdown of the game, making the score 28-14.

Lufkin got the ball back on their own 20 after The Woodlands' kickoff, ready to start their fourth drive. Lufkin put together a 12-play drive. A late-hit penalty put them in the end zone after a one-yard run by Kahlil Brown. The extra kick was good putting Lufkin down by only 7 with about five minutes left in the first half.

TWHS took the field at their own 33-yard line after Lufkin's kickoff. At this point in the game, The Woodlands' offense was unstoppable, scoring on all four possessions. This drive would be no different, as the offense scored again on a three-yard touchdown pass to Grant Murphy. With yet another extra point, TWHS went up 35-21.

In the second half, both sides seemed unable to make many stops. The Woodlands' offense picked up where they left off. After scoring on a three-yard run, the score was 42-21. On that drive, Schmid fumbled the ball, but Carlos Ramos recovered. Lufkin answered quickly. Jamel Richemond caught a seven-yard touchdown pass to put the score at 42-28.

TWHS continued to use every page in their playbook. They put together a three-play touchdown drive after Lufkin opted for an unsuccessful onside kick. Scoring their seventh touchdown of the game, The Woodlands offense seemed unstoppable. TWHS, still hot from their last touchdown, put up another seven points after a play in the red zone broke down, causing Schmid to scramble safely into the end zone. At this point, with TWHS comfortably in the lead, Lufkin put together an 82-yard drive, consisting of 15 plays, to make the score 56-35.

The fourth quarter went fast, as TWHS ran the ball to chew up the clock. Both teams scored again, making the final score 63-42.