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OF MONTGOMERY  COUNTY



The Woodlands rolls past Mesquite Horn in bi-district playoffs

By Keith MacPherson
Friday, November 11, 2016

SHENANDOAH – It didn't take much to get The Woodlands' playoff juices flowing. With the second play of the game, Mesquite Horn quarterback Chris Robison connected with Katrell Blakely on a 57-yard touchdown pass – the Jaguars' only lead of the game – helping spark a fire in the Highlanders.

"They've been averaging 43 points per game so we knew they were going to be explosive," The Woodlands coach Mark Schmid said. "We knew we were going to going to have a hard time to keep them from scoring. We just have to answer and play our game of offense."

And answer they did. The Highlanders used the early score as motivation, taking down Mesquite Horn 41-21 in the Class 6A Division I bi-district playoffs at Woodforest Bank Stadium on Friday.

The No. 4 state-ranked Highlanders (11-0) used an unrelinquishing offense and a bend-don't-break defense to move on to the area round where they will face Garland Sachse at Waco ISD Stadium at 7:30 p.m. next Friday.

The Woodlands quarterback Eric Schmid threw for 178 yards and three touchdowns and the Highlander offense piled up 331 yards on the ground, led by Carlos Ramos's 138 on 25 carries. Ramos got the bulk of the carries for the Highlanders after starting running back Jordan Talford left the game in the second quarter with a leg injury.

"(Carlos) became the workhorse in the second half for us," coach Schmid said. "He did a great job of finding the seams and grinding it and running the clock."

After the early score by Mesquite Horn, The Woodlands rattled off 21-unanswered points. The last of the three saw Kesean Carter take a hand off and slip past defenders for a 17-yard touchdown run to go up 21-7 with 10:22 in the second quarter.

Mesquite Horn (6-5) was hampered on offense as Robison, a senior University of Oklahoma commit, went down with an injury after a 20-yard run on the Jaguars' second series. "It was a different game (when Robison got hurt)," Schmid said. "It became more of a quarterback running game after that. It took us a series or two to adjust."

Jaguar sophomore quarterback Jermaine Givens gave the Highlander defense fits at times with his mobility. He found a crease on a second-and-goal from the Highlander 5 midway through the second quarter for a touchdown to cut the Highlander lead to 21-14.

Highlander quarterback Eric Schmid scored both through the air and with his legs in the first half. He found Chris Stewart on a fourth-and-4 for a 28-yard touchdown pass in the first quarter then later dove for the pylon with 22 seconds in the second quarter to go up 28-14.

Eric Schmid connected on his second touchdown pass of the game when he found Dylan Casey open in the end zone for a 13-yard strike. The score was set up by a fumble recovery and return to the Jaguars 48 by Carson Reich that was forced by Michael Purcell on a sack.

Eric Schmid hooked up with Stewart on the duo's second touchdown connection of the night on a 45-yard touchdown. Stewart beat his man-to-man press coverage off the line and Eric Schmid found him in stride as he had a step on his defender. Stewart had three catches for 96 yards. Carter made four grabs for 42 yards.

Givens found Blakely on a jump ball in the end zone for a 19-yard touchdown pass to shave The Woodlands' lead to 41-21. The score was set up after the Highlanders lost a fumble on an exchange from Eric Schmid to Ramos. Givens finished with 134 yards passing and 60 rushing. Running back Elton Taylor had 90 yards on 10 carries. Purcell had three of the Highlanders four sacks in the game.



The Woodlands Highlanders ground game KO's Mesquite Horn Jaguars in playoff opener

By Jim East, WOL Sports | Published 11/12/2016



THE WOODLANDS, TEXAS – In a hard-fought playoff opener during which both teams lost key cogs of their offense, The Woodlands High School Highlanders improved to 11-0 with a 41-21 triumph over the Mesquite Horn Jaguars on Friday night at Woodforest Bank Stadium.

The Woodlands Highlanders defeated the Mesquite Horn Jaguars 41-21 in their playoff opener Friday, November 11th 2016. The Highlanders path to a state championship doesn't get any easier next week. They advance to face Garland Sachse at 7:30 p.m., Friday, at Waco ISD Stadium. The Mustangs, also 11-0, defeated Skyline 34-13.

The Woodlands entered their first-round game with a well-deserved reputation for a punishing passing attack, so it came as no surprise that Mesquite stacked their defense to try to shut down that aerial assault. The Highlanders saw an opportunity to let their ground game do the talking, and running backs Jordan Talford and Carlos Ramos absolutely feasted on the Jaguars.

Talford gained 70 yards and scored a touchdown before leaving the game early in the second quarter with a sprained MCL. Ramos stepped right in for his teammate and became the workhorse the Highlanders needed behind a dominant effort from the offensive line. Ramos, the Player of the Game, carried the ball 26 times for 161 yards.

“When Jordan tweaked his knee, Carlos had to carry the load and did an outstanding job finding the seams and making big first-down runs,” said Highlander coach Mark Schmid. “You can’t predict when your opportunity is going to come, but you have to be ready, and Carlos was ready.”

Overall, the Highlanders ran for 362 yards and dominating time of possession with 30 minutes compared to just 18 for the Jaguars. Quarterback Eric Schmid had 200 yards of total offense, running for a touchdown and throwing for three more. He completed only three passes in the second half, but two were for scores to give his team an insurmountable lead.

“We knew their offense was very explosive, and we felt if we could run the football and grind the clock, we could control a lot,” said Coach Schmid. “Our offensive line did a great job.”

The Jaguars used their no-huddle offense to make an emphatic statement on the game’s opening drive. It took them just three plays and 59 seconds to go ahead 7-0. Wide receiver Katrell Blakely delivered the big blow, running a quick out to catch a short pass from star quarterback Chris Robison and then breaking free down the left sideline for 57-yard touchdown.

Unrattled, the Highlanders responded with a patient and perfectly executed 10-play, 75-yard march that spun more than four minutes off the clock. The Highlanders called Talford’s number six times, and on that final handoff he found a hole through the left side and sped away from his pursuers for a 30-yard touchdown.

On the next drive the Jaguars lost Robison for the game when he re-aggravated a shoulder injury that has bothered him all season. Jermaine Givens stepped in and delivered a courageous effort both running and throwing the football, but Mesquite just couldn’t keep pace with The Woodlands offense.

The Highlanders took the lead for the first time and for good on a gutsy fourth-and-six gamble in the first quarter. Schmid hit Chris Stewart for a 28-yard touchdown. Stewart had three catches for 95 yards, including a 45-yard score in the second half. They made it 21-7 early in the second quarter when Kesean Carter raced across the goal line on a 17-yard run just a few plays after Talford went down.

The Jaguars showed some grit on their next possession, a 12-play drive that culminated with Givens running it in on a 5-yard keeper. The extra point made it 21-14, but the Highlanders rattled off 20 unanswered points to put the game away.