

THE COURIER

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The Woodlands knocks off Oak Ridge, stays undefeated

By Demetrio Teniente
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SHENANDOAH - It was business as usual for The Woodlands quarterback Eric Schmid and the Highlanders against longtime rival Oak Ridge. While its offense was just as good as it's been over the last few games, it was The Woodlands' defense that shined under the lights Thursday night - holding the War Eagles to just 132 total offense on its way to a 42-2 win at Woodforest Bank Stadium.

"I told the kids exactly what we set out to do when we were preparing for Oak Ridge," The Woodlands coach Mark Schmid said. "Which was to continue to play good defense and continue to play good offense, have solid special teams, and continue getting better from last week. I saw that [tonight]."

Entering Thursday's contest, the Highlanders were averaging 59 points per game over its last three. But the War Eagle defense rose to the challenge and even forced a Highlander punt in the first quarter - something The Woodlands had only done once in its last two games combined.

Oak Ridge (4-4, 2-2 District 12-6A) also managed to pressure Eric Schmid on several occasions and defensive end Gavin Franklin even dropped him for a safety in the first five minutes of the second quarter.

"Our defensive staff has done a good job all year," Oak Ridge coach Dereck Rush said. "And our kids have done a good job of executing on the field. The [defensive line] is doing a good job. Joseph Ossai, Franklin, Kyle Fossland, and Darius Richmond are doing a great job for us right now. We are going to need them to step it up a little more in the next few games."

But despite its best efforts, Oak Ridge simply didn't have enough fire power to knock off The Woodlands (7-0, 3-0). Outside of the punt and the safety, The Woodlands scored on all five of its other possession when its first team was on the field.

With standout wide receiver Kyle Townsend still limited, Oak Ridge figured to rely heavily on its running game. But The Highlanders held the War Eagles to 1.81 yards per carry and just 58 total yards on the ground.

War Eagle quarterback Reinard Britz had some success throwing the ball in the first half, but it that didn't seem to matter much, after he was intercepted by The Woodlands senior linebacker Grant Milton near the end of the first half. Milton jumped in front of a shallow pass and took the ball 50 yards to the house to give the Highlanders a 28-2 lead with 55 seconds left in the second quarter.

While The Woodlands wasn't able to move the ball as efficiently in the first half, Eric Schmid continued to throw the ball extremely well. He completed his first seven passes 67 yards and touchdown, before missing on a deep ball to Dylan Casey.

"He has done a good job of protecting the football," Coach Schmid said. "We feel that if we can protect the football, [Eric] can do good things with it and he has done a great job of making good decision and putting the ball where it needs to be put every game."

Eric Schmid's first touchdown was a 30-yard bomb to Casey that capped off an eight-play, 75-yard opening drive that gave The Woodlands a 7-0 leads with 8:24 left in the first quarter. The Sam Houston State commit finished the night with 167 yards on 16-of-19 passing with two touchdowns, he also rushed for a score.

The Woodlands' second touchdown came off a 1-yard Chris Stewart run on a jet sweep. The touchdown run made it 14-0 Highlanders with 6:33 left in the opening quarter.

A 37-yard punt by Britz in the second quarter pinned The Woodlands at its own 6-yard line. Two plays later, Oak Ridge got its two points on the safety of Eric Schmid by Franklin.

The Woodlands shook off the offensive mistake by forcing an Oak Ridge 3-and-out and then driving 75 yards down the field in eight plays for a touchdown. Highlander tailback Carlos Ramos ran up the middle on a 3rd-and-1 from the War Eagle 24, broke a tackle from Oak Ridge safety Grant Stuard and raced into the end zone to make it 21-2 with 2:20 left in the first half.

On the second play of the Oak Ridge opening drive in the second half, Milton picked off Britz once more, after Ethan Bonner deflected a pass intended for Jimmie Moore on the War Eagles. "Oak Ridge is always a special game for me," Milton said. "I got my first varsity start against them two years ago so it's always been a big game. It's also always good to make a big play against a team like [Oak Ridge]. It makes you feel good, builds your confidence - especially with how we are rolling right now."

The Woodlands took over at its own 42 and finished in the end zone five plays later when Eric Schmid found Kesean Carter racing along the left sideline. Carter made the grab, put the defender in the spin cycle and raced into the end zone for the 39-yard score to make it 35-2 with 9:44 left in the third quarter.

Oak Ridge went 3-and-out on its following possession and The Woodlands responded with yet another touchdown drive. This time Eric Schmid capped off a 15-play drive with a 2-yard touchdown run to make it 42-2 with 47 seconds left in the third.

Carter was the Highlanders leading receiver with 91 yard on four catches, including his touchdown reception. Jordan Talford was The Woodlands' leading rusher with 53 yards on 12 carries. Oak Ridge was led by Britz's 26 rushing yards on five carries. He also threw for 74 yards on 4-of-11 passing. His leading receiver was Tanner Lacy who finished with 48 yards on four catches.

"Our kids played hard," Rush said. "They didn't quit. They made a few mistakes here and there, but they fought hard. We have to move on. We have two more guaranteed games and I think with our effort right now, if we clean up a few things and get some kids healthy, we will have a shot at getting in the playoffs."



Highlanders pull away early to preserve perfect season

Jim East, WOL Sports
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THE WOODLANDS, Texas -- Breaking the game open with two touchdowns in a span of 85 seconds just before halftime, The Woodlands Highlanders improved to 7-0 with a 42-2 victory over the Oak Ridge War Eagles on Thursday night at Woodforest Bank Stadium.

A touchdown run by The Woodlands' Carlos Ramos and a pick-six interception return by teammate Grant Milton turned a 14-2 game into 28-2 halftime lead in the blink of an eye, and Oak Ridge (4-4) could never solve The Highlander defense to mount any kind of comeback bid.

"That was a huge momentum shift right there," said Highlanders coach Mark Schmid. "We went down and scored, and then we made a great play on defense. Grant Milton picks it off in the flat, takes it to the house, and that turned the tide. They had a big uphill battle after that."

Milton, the Player of the Game, corralled his second interception of the night after the ball ricocheted off the intended receiver. That pick not only ended the first Oak Ridge drive of the second half, but it also gave The Woodlands a short field at their own 42.

Highlander quarterback Eric Schmid completed three passes on the ensuing drive, the last of which was a sensational 39-yard touchdown pass to Kesean Carter. Carter will want this one in his highlight reel; he grabbed the ball, darted quickly toward the sideline and then spun back toward the middle of the field to lose his defender and race in for the score. Lockhart West, who was 6-for-6 on PATs, tacked on the extra point to make it 35-2 with 9:44 left in the quarter.

The Woodlands concluded the scoring with clock-crunching 15-play, 61-yard drive that took nearly seven minutes. Schmid's three-yard keeper capped the march. He completed 16-of-19 passes for 207 yards and two touchdowns.

The Highlanders opened the game with an equally confident 75-yard drive which showed off their balanced passing and running games. Facing a fourth-and- one, Highlander tailback Jordan Talford broke loose for a 30-yard run, and one play later Schmid lofted a pass toward the end zone, hitting Dylan Casey in stride for a 30-yard touchdown. Casey also ran for a two-yard score later in the first quarter to make it 14-0.

Oak Ridge's defense stiffened up after that, forcing a punt on one Woodlands drive and recording a safety when defensive end Gavin Franklin wrapped up Schmid in the end zone with 7:15 left in the first half.

But the Highlanders reclaimed control about five minutes later with their late surge. Ramos took a handoff at the 24, bounced off one defender and spun away from another for a touchdown run to boost the Woodlands lead to 21-2.

Ramos' touchdown came with 2:20 on the clock, and then with just under a minute to play, Milton picked off a pass at midfield and dashed down the right sideline to swing all the momentum to the Highlanders.

"We did exactly what we set out to do when we started preparing for Oak Ridge," said Coach Schmid. "That was to continue to play great defense, continue to play good offense and have a solid special teams/kicking game. We wanted to make sure we got better from last week [a 72-7 win over a previously unbeaten opponent], and I saw that in the way we ran to the football. By and large, we were in great position all night long to make great plays on defense, and offensively we continued to execute."



The Woodlands rolls over Oak Ridge to remain perfect

By Jason McDaniel
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SHENANDOAH – The Woodlands rolled over the ridge Thursday night. Linebacker Grant Milton supplied two interceptions, one a pick-six, and quarterback Eric Schmid threw for 206 yards and two touchdowns in a 42-2 win over Oak Ridge at Woodforest Bank Stadium. The win sent the Highlanders to 7-0 for the first time since starting 10-0 in 2010.

"This gives us some momentum, but we all know we can play better and put up more points," Schmid said. They're 3-0 in District 12-6A, with only Conroe, Montgomery and College Park between them and another perfect regular season.

But, as Schmid said, the Highlanders have plenty left to accomplish. The last time they were 10-0, they lost to Klein Oak in the first round of the playoffs – and they don't want a repeat. "Our goal is to win the 12-6A championship and to have a deep, deep, deep playoff run," coach Mark Schmid said. "There are nine games left on our schedule, so we're knocking them down one at a time."

The War Eagles dropped to 4-4, 2-2. The Woodlands scored on its first two possessions for a quick 14-0 lead. Schmid completed the opening drive with a 30-yard scoring pass to Dylan Casey. Then, after a bad punt snap set the Highlanders up at Oak Ridge's 32, Schmid hit Kesean Carter for 30 yards, setting up Christopher Stewart's two-yard touchdown run for a 14-0 advantage less than six minutes into the game.

The Eagles harassed Schmid the next two series. Gavin Franklin and Malachi Cramm combined to sack Schmid, forcing a punt, and then Franklin sacked him in the end zone for a safety, cutting The Woodlands' lead to 14-2 in the second quarter.

"(Franklin) was able to give us some pressure inside, then jumped outside," Coach Schmid said. "He's a good player."

Then the Highlanders high-stepped into halftime. Running back Jordan Talford capped an 80-yard scoring drive by spinning through a tackle for a 24-yard touchdown, and Milton's pick-six of quarterback Reinard Britz covered 50 yards, giving the Highlanders a 28-2 lead.

"That right there turned the tide," Coach Schmid said. "They had a big hill to climb coming out in the second half, and we did a great job defensively shutting them down."

Milton snagged his second interception on the second play of the third quarter, setting up Schmid's 39-yard touchdown pass to Carter, who spun around Zachary Johnson at the sideline for a 35-2 lead. Schmid cinched it with a two-yard touchdown run to cap a 15-play drive that lasted 6:42.

He watched the fourth from the sideline after completing 15-of-18 passes for 206 yards in an efficient outing. "He's got a year under his belt, and that's some valuable experience, especially playing in some big games like he played in last year as a junior," Coach Schmid said. "And so the game has slowed down for him."

Oak Ridge finished with only 126 total yards (33-52 rushing) and seven first downs – three by penalty. The Woodlands had 338 yards and 18 first downs.

"Right now we're playing well in all three phases of the game," Coach Schmid said. "We've come a long way from the Cy-Fair game, where we were inconsistent offensively ... and each week we've gotten better. "As long as we can stay healthy, I feel good about us doing some good things."