



## The Woodlands cruises past Spring in home opener

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By Demetrio Teniente

SHENANDOAH — A week after squeezing out a three-point win over Cy-Fair, The Woodlands seemed to be firing on all cylinders Thursday night at Woodforest Bank Stadium.

The Highlanders' defense played lights out, and quarterback Eric Schmid was dialed in as The Woodlands cruised past Spring, 36-7.

"This was a big win coming off of last week," The Woodlands coach Mark Schmid said. "All week long, we talked about cleaning up our mistakes, and the kids took it to heart. We came out and performed really well against a very talented team with a lot of weapons."

The Woodlands (2-0) began the night with a 1-yard run by Jordan Talford to make it 7-0 with 39 seconds left in the first quarter. Spring (1-1) then fumbled the ensuing kickoff, and Charles Gringas recovered the loose ball at the Lions' 4-yard line.

On the very next play, Michael Purcell, The Woodlands' star defensive end, lined up at tight end and found himself wide open in the end zone.

“(I was thinking to myself), ‘Don’t drop it,’” Purcell said. “I saw it kind of come at me, I reached up and grabbed it, and there was half a second where I had bobbed it. I had never caught a pass or touched the ball before, but it was fun.”

The Woodlands had installed and used the special package with Purcell at tight end last week against Cy-Fair, but only called running plays out of it. Purcell's touchdown grab made it 14-0 with 24 seconds to play in the first quarter. The senior defensive end also recorded three sacks and another tackle for a loss in the win.

“(Purcell) is just a big, athletic kid,” Mark Schmid said. “He played basketball up until last year, so we knew he had great feet and has hands. We feel OK with throwing him the football, and he took care of everything he needed to on defense. He is a huge part of our football team.”

With 7:50 to play in the second quarter, Spring blocked Gringas' field goal attempt and took over at its own 30. Spring's Jacobe Finley then broke free for a 59-yard run, but was chased down from behind by Ethan Bonner at the Highlanders' 8. The Woodlands' defense bowed its neck and forced a turnover on downs, but gave the football right back seconds later when Eric Schmid was picked off by Paul Smith at the Highlanders' own 11-yard line.

Finley ran straight up the middle for 12 yards two plays later to make it 14-7 with 3:51 left to play in the first half. The Highlanders then ate up the remainder of the clock on a methodical drive that culminated in Eric Schmid walking into the end zone on a 10-yard run. His touchdown trot put the Highlanders up 21-7 going into halftime.

Eric Schmid then connected with Dylan Casey for a 31-yard pitch-and-catch, but the point after was blocked, and The Woodlands took a 27-7 lead with 5:25 left in the third quarter.

The Woodlands' defense tightened the screws in the fourth quarter and backed the Lions up in their own end zone early in the period. David Lee broke through the offensive line to block a punt, sending the ball out the back of the end zone for a safety.

Last week, Spring had 397 total yards on offense, all but four of which came from the run game. The Woodlands held the lions to just 259 Thursday night, including just 115 on the ground.

