

THE COURIER

OF MONTGOMERY  COUNTY



Klein Collins earns share of 15-6A crown, ends The Woodlands win streak

By Justin Maskulinski
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SHENANDOAH - When District 15-6A was announced with realignment last February, The Woodlands and Klein Collins game was circled on the calendar.

The first edition lived up to the hype, with Klein Collins beating the Highlanders 21-17 to claim a share of the 15-6A title and end The Woodlands' 39-game district winning streak.

"Words don't say enough," Tigers coach Adrian Mitchell said. "The way they fought - that says it all. When we were down, they could've thought, 'Oh my goodness, it's over,' and they didn't. We fell to Klein a couple weeks ago and our kids stayed tough together. I'm so proud of these guys. They've earned it."

The Highlanders (6-3, 6-1) led 10-0 early Friday at Woodforest Bank Stadium, but back-to-back scores from Klein Collins on either side of halftime brought the game back even.

"We left some points on the board in the first half, so I'm not all that fired up about that," The Woodlands coach Jim Rapp said. "But the guys played hard. I told my guys I love this football team, I really do. I love how they fight for each other. We've got to take this for what it is and we're going to be OK."

Klein Collins was down to third and 20 late and it looked like the Highlanders would get one more shot at the end zone. It was then that Braelon Bridges - who was filling in for banged-up starter Isaiah Spiller - ripped off a 22-yard run to ice the game.

Bridges had just three carries in the first half, but ended with 103 yards - and the game-winning touchdown - on 22 carries. "It's a different mindset coming from a backup," Bridges said. "I knew I had to step up when Isaiah got hurt and that's what I did - I fought hard. I chose to fight through adversity."

The Woodlands drove down to the Klein Collins 18-yard line on its first drive of the night, but lost 21 yards when a snap got past quarterback Casey Sunseri.

Shortly thereafter, Carter Doucet fielded a punt on a bounce and set The Woodlands up with starting field position at Klein Collins' 35-yard line. The 5-play drive ended with Bryeton Gilford's 21-yard touchdown. Gilford led the offense with 88 rush yards on 18 carries.

The Tigers responded with a 15-play, 55-yard drive that lasted 7:26 but ended without points. The visitors converted once on fourth down thanks to an offside penalty, but couldn't convert a second time after a dropped pass.

After the teams traded three and outs, The Woodlands added to its lead. A shanked punt gave the Highlanders good field position again and Fabrizio Pinton sent a 33-yard field goal through the uprights with 1:47 to go in the half.

"That was very helpful," Rapp said of the short fields. "One of the times we didn't score was on a short field. That could be the difference in the game."

Klein Collins got in the end zone with a two-minute drill. In 58 seconds, the Tigers moved 49 yards with quick pass plays. A defensive holding call awarded them first and goal, then Spiller scored on a 6-yard run with 15 seconds to go in the half. Despite missing most of the second half, Spiller rushed for 74 yards on 14 carries.

"That was huge," Mitchell said. "We work our two-minute every week and our kids trust it. It was huge right before the half to put our two-minute together. We tell them there's a sense of urgency, but not a sense of panic."

The Tigers began the second half with a 17-play, 65-yard drive that lasted 8:20. Carter Rhyne capped it with a 1-yard keeper to give Klein Collins its first lead of the night.

“It was big,” Bridges said. “The fans kept cheering us on. Their enthusiasm played into that drive.” The Highlanders took the lead back with a 13-play, 64-yard drive that spanned two quarters and nearly six minutes of game time. The drive was capped with a 10-yard play-action pass from Casey Sunseri to Ryan Farquhar.

About four minutes later, the Tigers took the lead back when Bridges scored on a 12-yard run. That touchdown stood as the winner.

The Tigers end the regular season with a bye week before beginning the postseason. “It’s what we need,” Mitchell said. “We’ve gone 10 straight games through a pretty doggone strong district. We’re going to continue to hone in our stuff and we’ll continue to improve on Klein Collins football, but it’s going to be some much-needed (rest and recovery).”

The Woodlands plays Klein Forest on Thursday with a chance to earn a share of a district title for the 10th time in 11 years. “(The Klein Collins loss) will not define us,” Rapp said. “One game does not define who we are.”

KLEIN COLLINS 21, THE WOODLANDS 17

Klein Collins	0	7	7	7	—	21
The Woodlands	7	3	0	7	—	17

SCORING SUMMARY

First quarter

TWHS: Bryeton Gilford 21 run (Fabrizio Pinton kick), 2:50.

Second quarter

TWHS: Pinton 33 field goal, 1:54.

KCHS: Isaiah Spiller 6 run (Axel Zavala kick), 0:15.

Third quarter

KCHS: Carter Rhyne 1 run (Zavala kick), 3:40.

Fourth quarter

TWHS: Casey Sunseri 10 pass to Ryan Farquhar (Pinton kick), 9:36.

KCHS: Braelon Bridges 12 run (Zavala kick), 5:37.