



HIGHLANDERS WIN 32nd STRAIGHT DISTRICT OPENER WITH DOMINANT WIN OVER PANTHERS

It was Homecoming for the Highlanders this week, as The Woodlands returned from a bye to start district with an impressive 62-13 win over Caney Creek in front of a sold out crowd. The Highlanders have now won 32 straight district openers, dating back to 1995. All 4 previous games between the Highlanders and Panthers have resulted in lopsided victories for The Woodlands.

THWS got the scoring started early. On just their second offensive snap, the Highlanders exploded for a 65-yd catch and run by Carter Cass. Cass would finish the game with 4 receptions for 116 yards. Then after a quick 3-and-out by Caney Creek, the Highlanders started another scoring drive. This time, quarterback Kaden Copelin hit Bryson Bourn on a deep 41-yd pass down the left sideline for the TD.

Later in the 1st quarter, the Highlander defense set up the offense with great field position after sophomore defensive back Darius Carlock intercepted a pass and returned it to the Panther 10 yard line. The Woodlands would only need one play after that as running back Jason Haskins scored to put the Highlanders up 21-0 after one quarter.

The Highlander defense struck again on the Panthers' next series as Mitchell Adams knocked the ball loose from Caney Creek quarterback Peyton Beckett, with linebacker Max Mitchell recovering for The Woodlands. Mitchell, who also recorded 6 tackles in the game including a sack, leads the Highlander defense on the season with 35 total tackles. To make his night even more impressive, Mitchell was named the Homecoming King at halftime.

After the fumble recovery, the Highlanders quickly found the end zone again, as Copelin hit Kaiden Stewart for a 20-yd touchdown to increase the lead to 28-0.

After all the quick strikes, the Highlanders put together a longer drive for their next score. The Highlanders used 9 plays, highlighted by a long 37-yd completion to Harry Miller, to drive down the field for their 5th score of the night. Haskins scored his 2nd TD of the night, this time from 3 yards out.

The Highlanders got the ball one more time in the first half. Copelin hit Cass for 31 yards to move The Woodlands into the red zone before Colton Weddel caught a 12-yd TD pass in the left corner of the end zone. After a dominant first half, the Highlanders headed into the locker room with a 42-0 lead.

The offense picked up right where they left off in the second half. The Highlanders received the kickoff to open the 2nd half and marched methodically down the field before scoring again to increase the lead to 49-0. This time, rolling out to his left, Copelin hit Harry Miller on a spectacular diving catch in the end zone for a 35-yd touchdown.

On the ensuing drive, Caney Creek finally found the end zone on a long pass completion. Kaymen Ferro hit sophomore Derek Thompson on a quick slant, who then raced 43 yards for the score. The Panthers missed the extra point, leaving the score at 49-6.

The Woodlands needed just one play to respond. Just called up to the varsity this week, junior running back Max Darce took the handoff on the first play of the drive and outran everyone on the way to a 75-yd touchdown run. It was the longest play from scrimmage for the Highlanders so far this season. Darce would finish with 102 yards on 5 carries including the TD.

The Highlanders would score one more time at the beginning of the 4th quarter. Sophomore running back Aldo Salinas took over at running back for the next series and helped drive TWHS down the field with several strong runs. Salinas would total 76 yards on 10 carries in his first varsity action. Bo Duke, who play QB for the Highlanders for most of the 2nd half, scored the Highlanders' final TD of the night on a 1-yd run.

Caney Creek did put together one last scoring drive to close out the game, with Ferro running it in for a 7-yd TD rush.

Defensively, Vincent Lewis led the team with 7 tackles on the night including a sack and a hurry while Cash Mock added 5 tackles. Senior defensive end Magnus Herndon recorded his 5th sack of the 2026 season, putting him at 21 sacks for his career. Herndon is now 3 sacks behind the career record of 24, held by Michael Purcell.

The Highlanders will return to action next week in the annual War of the Woods against College Park.