HIGHLANDER FOOTBALL

HIGHLANDERS OUTSCORE GRIZZLIES

The scoreboard operator was busy Friday night, as The Woodlands and Grand Oaks combined for a total of 116 points. It was the most total points ever scored in a game involving the Highlanders, breaking the previous record of 112 when Willis defeated The Woodlands 52-50 in 2023. This time the Highlanders came out on top, winning the high-scoring affair 68-48. The Woodlands is now one win away from their first outright district championship since 2021.

After forcing a Grizzlies punt to start the game, the Highlanders were first to find the end zone. On a 2nd and 16 near midfield, quarterback Kaden Copelin was forced out of the pocket before hitting Kaiden Stewart. After the reception, Stewart raced through the Grizzly secondary for a 56-yd touchdown as the Highlanders took an early 7-0 lead.

The Grizzlies needed just two plays to answer. Grand Oaks quarterback Harley Adams found Cam Hunt deep across the middle for a 71-yd score as the Grizzlies tied the score at 7.

TWHS scored again on their next drive. The Highlanders overcame a holding penalty with a 20-yd run by Copelin. Copelin again found Stewart for a big play – a 45-yd completion down to the 5-yd line. From there, Copelin hit Carter Cass for the score as the Highlanders went back up 14-7.

The Highlanders got a break on the Grizzlies next drive. As Grand Oaks lined up to punt, the Grizzly punter bobbled the snap and was unable to get the kick off. Max Mitchell tackled the punter for a huge loss and the Highlanders were set up with a short field at the 15-yd line. Despite the great field position, the Grizzly defense held as the Highlanders had to settle for a 27-yd field goal from kicker Franco Heinze.

On their next drive, Grand Oaks responded with another TD. After another long reception from Adams to Hunt, running back Kaden Carter broke multiple tackles on his way to an 18-yd TD run. This narrowed the Highlander lead to 17-14.

A few plays later, the Grizzlies took their first lead and only lead in the game with a defensive touchdown. Copelin was sacked and fumbled, with the ball bouncing directly into linebacker Karter Ross' hands. Ross returned the fumble 35 yards for the score and a 21-17 Grand Oaks lead.

The Highlander offense responded with a 6-play TD drive. Cass rushed 19 yards on a reverse and Bo Duke recorded a 21-yd reception. Copelin capped the drive with a 13-yd scoring strike to tight end Colton Weddel, as The Woodlands recaptured the lead 24-21.

After a quick three-and-out by Grand Oaks, the Highlander offense went back on the attack. A 12-play drive highlighted by a 16-yd completion to Bryson Bourn, stalled at the 9-yard line. Heinze connected from 26 yards for his second field goal of the game.

Grand Oaks again responded with an 8-play scoring drive of their own. Adams found receiver Brandon Francis for a 29-yd TD strike. With the score, the Grizzlies tied the score up at 27 right before halftime.

It appeared the two teams would enter the locker room tied, but Highlanders had other thoughts. On their first play of the next drive, Copelin hit Bourn on a short screen. Bourn found a hole on the left side and sprinted down the field for a 56-yard TD score. The Highlanders would finish the half with a 34-27 lead.

At the start of the second half, The Woodlands went on a scoring spree that would stretch the lead to 27 points. On the 2nd play of the second half, sophomore running back Aldo Salinas raced 59 yards for a touchdown.

The Highlander defense forced the Grizzlies into a punting situation. Nate Beagle blocked the punt with Vincent Lewis falling on the loose ball at the Grand Oaks 17-yard line. A few plays later, Copelin punched it in from 4 yards out for another TWHS touchdown.

On the next Grand Oaks series, Matthew Stuber chased down QB Adams and forced a fumble that was recovered by Magnus Herndon. With another short field, it didn't take long before running back Max Darce crossed the goal line for a 61-27 Highlander lead.

The Grizzlies finally put a stop to the 27 consecutive points with another TD connection between Adams and Hunt. On the ensuing Highlander drive, Copelin hit Cass for a 28-yd completion along the right sideline. Two plays later, Copelin again found Cass from 25 yards out for a 9th Highlander TD.

Grand Oaks would score one more time as time was winding down in the game. Adams would throw one more TD pass on the night, this time to Gavin Howard. When all was said and done, The Woodlands walked away with a 68-48 victory.

Copelin was 17-23 passing on the night for 291 yards and 5 TDs. Salinas led the team in rushing with 99 yards. Stewart recorded his first 100-yd receiving game with 108 yards on 3 receptions.

Max Mitchell recorded a game-high 16 tackles for the defense. Pilot Clary added 7 tackles while Nico Chavez finished with 6 tackles.

The Highlanders will wrap up their regular season next week against Oak Ridge while Grand Oaks will try and wrap up a playoff spot against Cleveland.