HIGHLANDER FOOTBALL

HIGHLANDERS SHATTER RECORDS IN WIN OVER WAR EAGLES, CLAIM DISTRICT TITLE

The Woodlands wrapped up its first district championship since 2021 with a dominating 63-7 win over Oak Ridge. On a night that saw several record-breaking performances, the Highlanders scored on the first play of the game and never looked back. The Woodlands has now won all 23 meetings between the two schools and look towards a first-round playoff matchup next week against Aldine Nimitz.

The Highlanders received the opening kickoff from Oak Ridge and wasted no time getting on the scoreboard. Quarterback Kaden Copelin found a wide-open Carter Cass who got behind the War Eagle defense for a 75-yd TD. It was a sign of things to come.

The War Eagles were unable to move the ball on their first series and were forced to punt. Four plays later Copelin hit Cass again, this time on a deep pass to the left corner for a 40-yd score. Oak Ridge didn't seem to have an answer for Cass, who was just getting started.

The Highlander defense forced a second consecutive three-and-out and the offense immediately went deep again. On the first play of the drive from the Oak Ridge 43 yard-line, Copelin stepped up in the pocket and fired it deep to Bryson Bourn as the Highlanders increased the lead to 21-0. In just 6 offensive plays, The Woodlands already had 3 touchdowns. Bourn now has 10 receiving TDs on the season.

The War Eagles responded with their best drive so far, passing midfield and reaching the Highlander 32-yard line. But before Oak Ridge could get any closer, the Highlander defense ended the scoring threat with a sack from Cole Maxwell.

The Highlander offense didn't strike as quickly on their next drive, using 10 plays before scoring again. The Copelin to Cass combination continued. The two connected on a 28-yd completion for a first down, and then across the middle for a 41-yd TD. The extra point was blocked by War Eagle defensive lineman Finn Walker, leaving the score at 27-0.

The Oak Ridge offense again moved the ball into Highlander territory after converting a fake punt. This time the War Eagles reached the TWH 34-yd line before another sack derailed the drive. Max Mitchell recorded a 3rd-down sack before the Highlander defense held on 4th down for the stop.

The Highlanders turned to the run game for their next score. Sophomore running back Aldo Salinas had runs of 15 and 12 yards to help move the ball into the red zone. The Woodlands would cap the drive with a 2-yd plunge into the end zone by Salinas. Salinas would also add a two-point conversion as the Highlanders took a 35-0 lead into the locker room at halftime.

The second half was much of the same. Three straight runs by the War Eagles failed to produce a first down as the Highlanders got set for their first possession of the 2nd half. The Woodlands started the 2nd half just like the first, needing just one play to add another 7 points to the scoreboard. Copelin hit Cass with a flare pass to the left side, who then raced down the sideline 61 yards for his 4th TD of the game. Cass would finish with 245 yards receiving on just 5 catches to set a new school record for receiving yards in a game. The previous record was 232 yards and was set by Kevin Beirne all the way back in 1989. He now has 18 receiving TDs on the season, which also sets a new school record.

With the score now at 42-0, the War Eagles again failed to record a first down – and the Highlanders again quickly marched towards another touchdown. On a 3rd and 19, Copelin scrambled to the right and found a wide open Kaiden Stewart, who sprinted down the sideline for a 36-yd score.

The Ware Eagles finally found some success on the next possession. Running back Jason Brooks broke loose for a 50-yd run. On the very next play, QB Clark Scott connected with Wyatt Peek straight down the middle for a 25-yd touchdown.

The Highlander offense wasted no time responding to the Oak Ridge score. On the second play of the next drive, Copelin rolled out to the right and fired a strike to Harry Miller down the right sideline for a 55-yd TD completion. It was Copelin's 7th TD pass of the night, tying his own school record for TD passes in a game. Copelin was 15-17 on the night for a school-record 428 yards, beating the previous record of 416 yards that was set by Mabrey Mettauer.

Later in the 4th quarter, running back Kevin Synatschk put the final touches on the victory. Synatschk led the team in rushing on the night. He would score from 2 yards out to put the final score at 63-7. Kicker Franco Heinze connected on 7-8 extra points.

Matthias Molito and Max Mitchell led the defense in tackles with 6 each while Vincent Lewis added 5 tackles. Nate Beagle also added a sack in the game while Jackson Hanyzewski recovered a fumble on a muffed punt return.

With the win, the Highlanders advance to the state playoffs as the district's top seed. They will host Aldine Nimitz at Woodforest Stadium on Friday, November 13 at 7pm.