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Highlanders outscore Oak Ridge 49-28

By: Howard Roden , Assistant Sports Editor



Meet the new boss, same as the old boss.

After winning only once during the first half of the season, The Woodlands Highlanders proved Friday night they're still a force to be reckoned with in District 15-5A. After taking Oak Ridge's best shot, the Highlanders amassed a total of 513 yards on offense en route to their 49-28 district-opening victory at Buddy Moorhead Memorial Stadium.

Senior quarterback Tyler Eckenrode enjoyed the best performance of his short varsity career, completing 17 of 23 passes for 261 yards and three touchdowns. His three TD passes came in the second quarter, lifted the 2-4 Highlanders to a 28-14 lead at halftime.

With its offensive line eventually taking command, The Woodlands turned to Tracy Milo in the second half. The senior running back scored on runs of 3, 4 and 8 yards and finished the night with 179 yards on 35 carries.

Now 4-2 after its second loss in as many weeks, Oak Ridge hoped to collect its first-ever win over The Woodlands on its fourth attempt. And the War Eagles appeared to have the Highlanders on their heels less than two minutes into the game when sophomore slot back Freddie Dotson

The Woodlands running back Tracy Milo ran for 179 yards and three touchdowns against Oak Ridge Friday night at Moorhead Stadium. (Staff photo by Jerry Baker)

electrified the Oak Ridge crowd with his 45 yard touchdown run four games deep into the contest. Impressive as was Dotson's run, that was only the preliminary as the two teams swapped touchdowns via kickoff returns over the next 30 seconds.

The Woodlands' Logan Rowe returned the ensuing kickoff 87 yards to level the score at 7. But Tyler Barrett responded with a 79-yard return of his own that put Oak Ridge back on top at 14-7.

Rowe sliced through the heart of Oak Ridge's coverage team for his touchdown. Meanwhile, the War Eagles' Jay Buchanan provided excellent downfield protection on Barrett's return.

The momentum appeared to remain with the War Eagles when The Woodlands failed to get off Daniel Weimer's 34-yard field goal attempt. Oak Ridge was seeking to add to its margin when the War Eagles fumbled at The Woodlands' 37 late in the opening quarter. That miscue brought the Highlanders to life. Driving 63, 71 and 98 yards over their next three possessions, the Highlanders controlled 11 minutes of the scoreboard clock.

Eckenrode was on fire during that stretch, at one point complete nine consecutive passes. He connected with Ryan Eastman for five yards to complete the first drive just 10 seconds into the quarter. Eckenrode was 4-for-4 on the second drive, including his 11-yard touchdown pass to Lance Dozier with 6:56 before halftime.

Oak Ridge's Barrett spiraled a 59-yard punt to The Woodlands 2-yard-line. But that set the stage for the Highlanders' 12-play march capped with Alex Tweedy's leaping catch of Eckenrode's 4-yard attempt with just 17 seconds before halftime.

Dotson added a 17-yard touchdown run after Milo's first touchdown of the second half. Dunahoe scored on a 4-yard keeper in the fourth quarter to complete Oak Ridge's scoring.

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