

Highlanders rally for victory

Offense clicks in second half to propel team

By JENNY DIAL Copyright 2008 Houston Chronicle

Nov. 15, 2008, 2:15AM



The Woodlands football coach Mark Schmid knows how to give a halftime talk.

With his team trailing Westfield at halftime, Schmid knew just what to say to get the Highlanders on track.

His words worked, and The Woodlands advanced to the Class 5A Region II area playoffs with a 24-6 win Friday night at Pidgeon Stadium.

The Highlanders scored 21 unanswered points in the second half to overturn a 6-3 Westfield lead in the first half.

"I knew I just had to get the kids to calm down," Schmid said. "I thought our defense was playing well, but our offense just couldn't seem to get anything going. We were only down three points though. Nothing was a lost cause."

The Woodlands, which had only 23 passing yards in the first half, started making big plays. Quarterback Andy McCloud found receivers to get the Highlanders downfield, and Ryan Eastman, who lines up at quarterback in The Woodlands' goal-line offensive schemes, scored twice on 4- and 1-yard runs.

"I have a pretty great job," Eastman said. "We get downfield and I get to score. But really, we just moved the ball so much better in the second half."

The Highlanders also took advantage of momentum plays. In the third quarter, after The Woodlands' first touchdown, Westfield attempted a fake punt. The result was a 10-yard loss and turnover on downs that led the Highlanders to another touchdown drive.

"That was like blood in the water for our kids," Schmid said. "We had just scored, then we had that play. Our kids took advantage of it and made something happen. I think after that, we had all the momentum and confidence we needed."

The Woodlands' defense was solid. Westfield finished the game with 18 carries for minus-16 yards and no offensive touchdowns. Its touchdown came in the first quarter when linebacker Terre Camille picked off a Woodlands screen pass and returned it 34 yards for the score.

"Our defense was really focused, and I was pleased with what they did," Schmid said.

Defensive lineman Loren Baker had three sacks and said that stopping Westfield quarterback Jacoby Walker in the spread offense was the key of the night.

jenny.dial@chron.com

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Highlanders rally past Westfield



The Woodlands' Loren Baker sacks Westfield's Jacoby Walker in the fourth quarter at Pridgeon Stadium Friday night. To view or purchase this photo, and others like it, visit [this link](#)

By Mike Taylor

Updated: 11.15.08

HOUSTON – The Woodlands ended two years of playoff frustration with a 24-6 bi-district playoff victory over Spring Westfield Friday night at Cy Fair ISD's Ken Pridgeon Stadium.

The Highlanders had lost to Westfield in the bi-district playoffs each of the last two years by a combined score of 88-42.

"They're a great football program," Woodlands coach Mark Schmid said. "They play deep in the playoffs every year. That's a feather in our kids' cap to face a quality opponent like that in the first round and be able to come out with a win."

Westfield held a 6-3 halftime lead, but the Highlanders pulled away with a 21-point second half, powered by three touchdowns from Ryan Eastman.

Eastman scored on a four-yard quarterback draw to put his team on top 10-6 midway through the third quarter, then dove over a pile at the goal line on the next Woodlands possession to give the Highlanders some breathing room.

The second score came after Westfield had tried a fake punt from The Woodlands' 40-yard line. The direct snap sailed by upback Jordan Pierce, resulting in a 13-yard loss.

Six plays later, The Woodlands had put the game out of reach, 17-6.

"I think that was a huge part of the game," Schmid said of the failed fake punt. "It was a big, big boost for our kids."

The Woodlands will play either Round Rock Stony Point or Langham Creek in next week's area round of the playoffs.

The Woodlands defense didn't allow a point all night, blocking an extra point attempt after Westfield's Terré Camille picked off a pass and raced 34 yards into the endzone to start the scoring barely two minutes into the game.

Westfield was stuffed to the tune of 17 yards rushing on 18 carries, while Mustangs quarterback Jacoby Walker completed only 6-of-13 passes after the first quarter. He had hit on 10-of-16 in the first quarter.

Eastman capped the scoring with a 37-yard pass to Logan Rowe after he had taken a reverse pitch from running back Daniel Lasco.

The Mustangs had opened the game with a nine-play, 37-yard drive to the Highlander 33. Walker completed five of six passes to start the drive, but Westfield turned the ball over on downs after three straight incompletions.

Three plays later, McCloud was intercepted by Camille.

The Woodlands' lone successful first-half drive ate up 61 yards in seven plays. One of two big gains came when quarterback Andy McCloud found Matt Pettitt for 10 yards and a late hit out of bounds tacked on 15 more.

Two plays later, Daniel Lasco ripped off a 29-yard run to give the Highlanders a first and goal at the 10. But the drive stalled when Lasco was stuffed for two yards on first down and two incompletions followed.

Ben Pruitt kicked a 26-yard field goal at the 7:04 mark of the first to cut the Westfield lead in half.