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Highlanders blank Cavaliers in District 14-5A opener



The Woodlands wide receiver Randy Knust makes a catch as College Park's Cameron Tobey (23) and Keenan Cook (5) close in during second-quarter action Friday night at Woodforest Bank Stadium in Shenandoah.

By Mike Taylor

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SHENANDOAH — The Woodlands defense ensured its sopping wet homecoming crowd would nonetheless go home happy with a dominating performance Friday night.

The Highlanders stifled crosstown rival College Park — holding the Cavaliers to 107 total yards — in a 14-0 victory in the teams' rainy District 14-5A opener at Woodforest Bank Stadium.

The Woodlands running back Daniel Lasco broke free on a 67-yard scoring run late in the first quarter, Randy Knust turned a screen pass into a 10-yard touchdown catch in the second and the Highlanders made a goal-line stand late in the fourth to improve to 6-0 overall.

"I think our defense has gotten better every week," The Woodlands coach Mark Schmid said. "That's the group that coming in had the least amount of varsity experience.

"Those kids have grown up a lot and they're playing with confidence and the goal-line stand was a good example of that."

Trailing 14-0 with little more than three minutes remaining, College Park (3-3, 0-1) had four chances from inside the five-yard line but couldn't punch it in the end zone.

On first and goal from the five, quarterback Tyler Chaumet gained three yards on an option keeper to the left side. On second down, Chaumet's sneak picked up a yard. With another yard to go, Chaumet tried another sneak but was ruled down inches shy of the goal line.

On fourth down, the third straight quarterback sneak turned disastrous for College Park as the Highlanders somehow forced a fumble in the pileup at the goal line. Jason Burnett recovered the ball.

"I'm not going to take anything away from them," College Park coach Richard Carson said. "They're ranked No. 1 in the area for a reason. They're good."

"I thought we got in (on third down), that's what everybody keeps telling me. I thought we got in and we lost it on fourth down. I guess you have to get all the way in, I don't know."

The Cavs forced a three and out on the ensuing Highlander possession and had one last gasp, but Ryan Clapsaddle sealed the win by jumping a sideline route and securing an interception. He fumbled the ball as he was tackled, but The Woodlands recovered, picked up a first down on a personal foul three plays later and ran out the clock.

"This is a big game coming in here and we knew we had to stand up and do great," Clapsaddle said. "All the guys were fired up for this rivalry."

"We dropped back, we saw the pass — we were looking for a pass the whole time — we saw them throw it. I just reacted to it."

Paco Solano led College Park with 69 yards rushing on 11 carries, but none of his backfield mates had any success with the run. Chaumet and Taylor Parsons finished 2 of 8 passing for 16 yards.

"We're far enough along in our program that we're not in search of moral victories," Carson said. "We're trying to get wins. But I'm proud of our effort, our defensive kids. They took a little heat for the last game we played and they had a lot of pride and they came back and just played lights out."

The Cavaliers gave up 31 fourth-quarter points to Cinco Ranch two weeks ago in a 38-35 loss.

Friday, Lasco led all players in total yards, with 150 on 20 carries. He was only once stopped behind the line of scrimmage and on his scoring run he shed at least four would-be tacklers on his way to pay dirt.

The junior leapt over two defenders at the line of scrimmage, spun out of a tackle five yards downfield and beat another Cav a few steps later before making a cut to the right and outracing everyone down the sideline.

"We've had some games where the offense steps up and we've had some games where the defense steps up," Lasco said. "This is one of those games where the defense stepped up. They helped us out a lot."

The Highlanders doubled their lead when they churned out a 15-play, 80-yard drive that took 5:56 off the clock in the second quarter.

Lasco ran eight times for 41 yards and quarterback Trent Eckel picked up seven yards on three totes. The big play came when Eckel found Brett Felton for a 22-yard pickup on third and 15.

Four plays later, Randy Knust caught a screen pass and scooted into the end zone from 10 yards out. Knust, who fell down at the start of the play, finished with game highs of four catches and 52 yards receiving. Eckel was 9 of 14 for 127 yards with the touchdown and no interceptions.

"We gave up one big play and we gave up one long drive," Carson said. "That's what you want to make them do, is drive."



The Woodlands outlasts College Park 14-0

By TODD HVEEM Copyright 2009 Houston Chronicle

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SHENANDOAH — The 9,500 or so fans who braved the wind and rain on Friday night probably walked out of Woodforest Bank Stadium scratching their head.

Is The Woodlands really the No. 1-ranked team in the Houston area and third-ranked team in the state of Texas?

Or is College Park, which sits squarely at .500, much better than its record indicates.

“We could easily be 5-1 right now,” College Park head coach Richard Carson said after watching his game Cavaliers battle the top-ranked Highlanders tooth-and-nail before falling 14-0.

“Our program is past the point of moral victories,” he added. “But I am really proud of our kids.”

The Woodlands, which improved to 6-0 overall and 1-0 in District 14-5A with the victory, was never in any real danger of losing the game. But Highlanders running back Daniel Lasco knew his team had been smacked in the mouth after the contest.

“They are a tough team,” said Lasco, who rushed for 149 rushing yards. “You have to give them credit. They came out and gave us everything they had.”

Lasco’s 67-yard touchdown run with only six ticks left in the first quarter gave the Highlanders a 7-0 lead. On the play, he broke two tackles at the line of scrimmage, did a 360-degree spin, then outraced the Cavaliers secondary down the right sideline.

“Honestly, I don’t know what goes through my mind when stuff like that happens,” said the 6-foot-1, 190-pound Lasco. “My linemen did a good job of blocking, I got past a couple guys, then I kept on going.”

Trent Eckel, who completed nine of 14 passes for 131 yards, then found Randy Knust with a 10-yard touchdown pass with 1:06 left in the half to up the ante to 14-0.

Knust, who is expected to sign with Arizona State, finished the contest with four catches for 56 yards.

But in the second half, it was defense, defense and more defense.

College Park held The Woodlands to only three first downs over the final 24 minutes. Of course, The Woodlands also held the Cavaliers to only three first downs.

College Park looked like it might climb back in it when backup quarterback Tyler Chaumet directed a time-consuming march in the middle of the fourth quarter.

Chaumet, who replaced the injured Taylor Parsons, picked up 13 yards, including seven on a crucial third down, and Paco Salano added 21 more on a drive that took the Cavs to The Woodlands’ 1 with just over three minutes left in the game.

But on third-and-goal, the referees ruled Chaumet came up a foot short on a quarterback sneak. Chaumet then fumbled the ball on fourth-and-a-foot to end the contest.

“I thought we were in on third down,” admitted Carson. “That would have at least given us a chance.”

The Cavs got one final possession after forcing The Woodlands to punt, but Ryan Clapsaddle sealed the game when he intercepted Chaumet's sideline pass with 1:47 remaining.

"I dropped back, saw it (the ball) and reacted to it," Clapsaddle said. "It was a big game. Our defense really was fired up for it."

College Park, which dropped to 3-3 overall and 0-1 in District 14-5A, finished the game with only 93 total yards as Parsons was sacked five times – two by Robert Bouthilet – in the contest for minus-40 yards.

The Woodlands ended with 268 total yards, its lowest output of the season.

"It turned into a defensive battle," Carson said. "I don't think a lot of people were expecting that. Our defense gave up one big play and one drive. That is about it."