

THE COURIER

OF MONTGOMERY  COUNTY

Despite miscues, The Woodlands cruises past CHS



The Woodlands' Randy Knust hauls in a pass over Conroe defensive back Josh Schilhab during third-quarter play Friday night at Buddy Moorhead Memorial Stadium.

By Howard Roden

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Four turnovers – three of them occurring in the first quarter – can be enough to cripple a football team. Not The Woodlands Highlanders.

The state's third-ranked Class 5A squad rose above its mistakes Friday night to pull away from Conroe High for a 55-21 win before a near-capacity crowd of 8,000 at Buddy Moorhead Memorial Stadium.

The Woodlands now leads the series 20-11-1.

Now 8-0 on the season and 3-0 in District 14-5A, the Highlanders continued their march toward a title showdown against Lufkin next week by rolling up 466 total yards despite losing the football on their first three offensive possessions.

The Woodlands finished the night with four turnovers. The Highlanders had committed a total of nine in the previous seven contests.

"It was frustrating," said TWHS coach Mark Schmid. "But then we settled down in the second quarter and played well in the second half.

"Our defense played really well on a short field and it makes you feel good when you score on defense and on special teams," he said. "The kids played hard and they're excited about the victory."

Junior running back Daniel Lasco, the district's leading rusher, pushed his season total to 1,217 yards with 148 hard-earned yards against Conroe High's defense. He scored on runs of 29 and 7 yards.

Quarterback Trent Eckel completed 9 of 18 passes for 269 yards, including scores of eight yards to Jonathan Wilcher and 35 to sophomore Blake Webb, respectively. The former catch came with 25 seconds before halftime, boosting TWHS' lead to 24-7.

But it was the Highlanders' defense that set the tone early when, on the second play of the game, linebacker Perry Cooper raced through the Tigers' offensive line to sack quarterback Jordan Marah for a nine-yard loss.

Taking a cue from Cooper's play, Garrett Grimes made a one-handed block of Caleb Kroon's punt attempt and The Woodlands senior fell on the football in the Conroe High end zone for a 7-0 lead at 9:55 of the quarter.

Veteran defensive back Ryan Clapsaddle recorded his third interception of the season, and returned it 85 yards for a 48-21 lead with 4:46 remaining in the game.

Ben Pruitt kicked field goals of 22 and 31 yards for the Highlanders, while sophomore Cooper Woodyard tacked on a 21-yard touchdown run with 13 seconds left.

Marah, the district's leading passer, threw for two touchdowns in the second half. His nine-yard toss to Brandon Thornton brought Conroe High (3-5, 1-2) to within 13 points with 29 seconds left in the third quarter.

But that's when TWHS countered with Lasco's seven-yard TD – set up by Eckel's 70-yard catch and run by Peter Falivene – on the Highlanders' next possession. Even when Marah lofted a perfect strike to Kroon for a 54-yard score less than a minute later, the Highlanders came right back.

They marched 61 yards in just four plays, the capper being Eckel's 35-yard precise toss to Webb at 8:08 of the fourth quarter.

"We didn't make enough big plays," Conroe High coach Roger Holtkamp said. "We had some opportunities but the game got away from us. In the fourth quarter they (The Woodlands) shut the door on us."

After the Highlanders' blocked punt, Conroe High's optimism rebounded when, on the visitors' first play on offense, senior defensive Josh Schilhab recovered a fumble at TWHS' 17. From there, Darrell Thomas (28 carries for 147 yards) got the call five times, including his one-yard dive into the end zone with 4:09 left in the opening quarter.

Brett Campagna converted the point-after to tie the score at 7.

The Woodlands defense steps up in rout of Conroe

By GLENN SATTELL For the Chronicle

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ERIC CHRISTIAN SMITH FOR THE CHRONICLE

CONROE — Last year, Conroe defeated Lufkin at Buddy Moorhead Stadium, preventing the Panthers from claiming an outright District 14-5A championship.

Instead, Lufkin settled for a share of that title with The Woodlands.

Trent Eckel and Daniel Lasco made sure No. 3 state-ranked The Woodlands would not be Conroe's upset victim this year.

Eckel threw for 237 yards and two touchdowns while Lasco rushed for 151 yards and two touchdowns in the Highlanders' 55-21 victory at Conroe Friday.

Eckel threw touchdown passes of 8 and 54 yards to Jonathan Wilcher and Blake Webb, respectively, while Lasco scored on runs of 29 and 7 yards as the Highlanders broke a 7-7 first quarter tie to take a 24-7 lead at halftime.

The Woodlands defense, paced by Perry Cooper, came up big as well, scoring on a block punt and an interception return to help offset four Highlanders turnovers.

"It started out kind of rough," Lasco said. "We had a lot of turnovers at the beginning, but we just stuck with our game plan."

The Woodlands turned the ball over three times in the first quarter and managed just one first down.

"It's tough to overcome that," said Highlanders coach Mark Schmid. "But we were able to do that tonight because we played really good defense and pulled our bootstraps up on offense."

The Woodlands (8-0, 3-0 14-5A) grabbed an early lead when senior Garrett Grimes blocked and recovered a Conroe punt in the end zone. The Woodlands has scored first in every game this season except against Katy.

That also was the only game in which the Highlanders have trailed. Katy led 28-24 with 7:58 left in the fourth quarter.

Ryan Clapsaddle intercepted two Conroe passes, returning the latter one 82 yards for a touchdown.

The win sets up a potential showdown of district unbeaten teams in Lufkin next Friday if the Panthers (2-0, 6-1) can get past College Park (1-1, 4-3) today at Woodforest Stadium.