

# THE COURIER

OF MONTGOMERY  COUNTY

## Home Explosion: Highlanders destroy Kingwood 48-7 in 2009 home debut



The Woodlands High School wide receiver Randy Knust heads for the end zone as Kingwood's Carter Brown pursues during Friday night's game at Woodforest Stadium.

**By Michael Taylor**

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**SHENANDOAH** — No. 1-ranked The Woodlands obliterated Kingwood 48-7 in its home opener at Woodforest Bank Stadium Friday night.

The Highlander defense allowed only 78 total yards and the offense clicked on all cylinders from the start, driving up and down the field at will while building a 34-0 halftime lead. "I think the first half was one of the better halves that we've ever played," The Woodlands coach Mark Schmid said.

The Highlanders (4-0) held Kingwood's option running game in check, allowing those 78 yards on 41 carries and forcing incompletions on the only two Mustang pass attempts. Last week, The Woodlands allowed 397 rushing yards to Clear Lake's option attack in a 35-27 win.

"I think we were better defensively this week because we played Clear Lake last week," Schmid said. "We got to see the same style of offense and our kids were familiar with it and I think we played much better because of last week. It's hard to simulate that in practice because that's not something we do."

The Highlanders received the opening kickoff and traveled 74 yards in 10 plays to take a

3-0 lead on Ben Pruitt's 23-yard field goal. On its next possession, The Woodlands took only six plays to go 54 yards and made it 10-0 on Daniel Lasco's three-yard run on a direct snap.

Toward the end of the first quarter, Highlander quarterback Trent Eckel hit Randy Knust on a screen pass and Knust raced 54 yards for a touchdown.

Kingwood (2-2) lost the ball on a fumble four plays later and Eckel capitalized on the next play, finding Brett Felton open in the middle of the field for a 27-yard score and 24-0 lead.

Eckel finished off another sustained drive, this one 11 plays for 77 yards, with a five-yard pass to Jonathan Wilcher at the 4:20 mark of the second.

Pruitt kicked a 19-yard field goal as time expired in the second quarter for the 34-0 advantage.

Lasco led all rushers with 111 yards on 17 carries. On the opening drive of the game, he had 47 of those yards on seven rushes. Like all of The Woodlands' skill-position players, he sat out the second half.

"When you have somebody like Daniel back there, you're going to have some drives like that," Eckel said. "He's just so solid. He can run the ball, run the ball, run the ball — and still do it. "We ran the ball, and when the linebackers came in we started throwing the ball. The play calling was really good tonight."

Eckel completed 11-of-13 passes for 193 yards and the three touchdowns. He lamented his one interception, which came on a deep ball late in the second quarter, but was happy to turn the controls over in the second half.

"I felt pretty good up until the interception," Eckel said. "The receivers made a lot of good plays. When you throw it 10 yards and your receiver takes it 65 it's alright, it's a good feeling."

Joseph Schneider came on in the second half for the Highlanders and finished 5-of-6 for 30 yards, including a nine-yard scoring toss to Blake Webb that increased the lead to 41-0 early in the fourth quarter.

Xavier Taylor took a speed option pitch from Schneider, who took a shot after holding the ball just long enough, 27 yards to the end zone for the final Highlander points on the night. Taylor finished with 54 yards on four carries.

The lone bright spot for Kingwood was Zack Ackerman's 101-yard kickoff return for a touchdown on the ensuing kickoff. But the game had long gotten out of hand.

Kingwood had only three first downs in the first half and didn't move the ball across midfield until three minutes remained in the third quarter. On the next play, the Mustangs lost five yards. They were forced into one of their seven punts when Brian Nordstrom sacked the quarterback two plays after that.

## Highlanders prove to be unstoppable

### Explosive start sets up team for easy home win

By JASON McDANIEL Copyright 2009 Houston Chronicle

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ERIC CHRISTIAN SMITH For the Chronicle

The Woodlands' Daniel Lasco, left, slices through Kingwood's defense in the first quarter.

SHENANDOAH – The wait was long, but it was worth it for the fans at The Woodlands' home opener.

Playing in their first game at Woodforest Stadium four weeks into the season, the Highlanders hit Kingwood hard in the first half before rolling to a 48-7 non-district win Friday night.

"We were looking forward to this one," quarterback Trent Eckel said. "It's a year-old stadium, we've been hearing about the sold-out crowd, and we were ready for it.

"I think we played well."

That's an understatement.

The Woodlands (4-0) led 34-0 after a brutal opening 24 minutes for the Mustangs (2-2), who had just three first downs and 40 total yards at the break. By then, the Highlanders already had 16 and 315.

They scored on six of their first seven possessions, with field goals by Ben Pruitt at the beginning and end of the first half. The four in the middle featured big plays and long drives.

Daniel Lasco gave The Woodlands a 10-0 lead late in the first quarter with a 3-yard run. He had 111 rushing yards at the half. Then Eckel took over, completing his first nine passes.

Eckel and Randy Knust hooked up for another long-scoring reception – this from 54 yards – after the pair connected for two last week against Clear Lake. That made it 17-0 after the first quarter.

Eckel then found Brett Felton and Jonathan Wilcher for 27- and 5-yard TD passes in the second quarter. Eckel was 11-of-13 passing for 193 yards and three scores before halftime.

“We did a really good job of spreading the ball around,” The Woodlands coach Mark Schmid said. “It looked like the way they were going to defend us was to try to take Lasco out of the game.”

“They crowded the box and Trent and the receivers stepped up and made some big plays in the passing game.”

Eckel did throw an interception with under two minutes in the first half, but the Mustangs fumbled the ball back two plays later, and Pruitt tacked on an 18-yard FG with no time left.

“We did what we wanted to do,” Eckel said. “We executed well.”

The Woodlands’ offensive line played briefly in the third quarter, then joined Eckel, Lasco and the rest of the starters as second-half spectators.

Backups Xavier Taylor (four rushes, 54 yards, TD) and Joseph Schneider (5-of-6 passing, 112 yards, TD) kept the Highlanders’ offense going in the second half. They finished with 404 total yards. Zack Ackerman erased the shutout with a 101-yard kickoff return with 6:49 left in the fourth quarter. Kingwood finished with 90 total yards, all on the ground.

“We’ve been on the road the last three weeks and we’ve had a couple tough outings – a nail biter at Katy and last week at Clear Lake – so it was great to be home and the kids responded,” Schmid said.