

The Woodlands Villager

Highlanders 10-0 for third time



By **DAVID ARNO**

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SHENANDOAH — New Caney stood between No. 3 state-ranked and No. 1 HSgridiron.com area-ranked The Woodlands and a perfect regular season Thursday night at Woodforest Bank Stadium.

When it was over, it was mission accomplished, with the Highlanders riding high after a 45-8 victory. The 10-0 regular season is the third in The Woodlands' history, with the first coming in 1998 and the second in 2003, when the Highlanders advanced all the way to the state championship game.

"It was a big win for us, especially from the standpoint that we were able to go undefeated," The Woodlands coach Mark Schmid said. "To be able to do that is a big accomplishment for the kids. It gives us some momentum going into the playoffs."

The Highlanders, District 14-5A's top seed in the Class 5A Division I playoffs will be awaiting the outcome of several games in District 13-5A tonight before it is decided who they will face in bi-district next week. Depending on multiple scenarios, The Woodlands will play either Klein Forest, Westfield or Klein.

Avenging their sole black mark in the regular season from last year with their first win ever over Lufkin last week, The Woodlands secured the outright district title with the win over New Caney. The Eagles finished their season at 2-8 overall and 0-5 in the league.

Knowing that they'd need to play a perfect game and then some, New Caney opened the contest with an onside kick that they nearly recovered, but it was knocked out of bounds, which gave the ball to the Highlanders with good field position on their own 48.

After a run of four on first down, Cooper Woodyard took the ball 34 yards for the first of six touchdowns in the first half, while the Eagles would manage only 13 yards during the first two quarters.

The Highlanders would extend their lead with a nine-yard Peter Falivene run and a 46-yard Trent Eckel pass to Blake Webb for a 21-0 lead by the end of the first quarter. On the first play of the second quarter, The Woodlands would add to its lead with a 42-yard Eckel pass to Randy Knust.

With the game firmly in hand, Eckel was pulled for junior quarterback Joseph Schneider, who added touchdown passes of 18 and 69 yards, to Knust and Ward, respectively.

With a 42-0 lead that the Highlanders took into the locker room at halftime, the rest of the starters hit the bench and Schneider was pulled for Cole Jordan. An effective passer himself, Jordan went 4 for 7 for 46 yards.

Determined not to be shut out, the Eagles managed a touchdown on an 18-yard scamper by quarterback Christian Perez with 50 seconds left in the third quarter.

The Woodlands wouldn't score any more touchdowns in the second half, but did tack on a 22-yard Ben Pruitt field goal as the Highlanders cruised to the victory.