

TWHS holds off late Kingwood surge to remain in first place



The Woodlands running back Daniel Lasco celebrates a touchdown in the first quarter during Friday night's game against Kingwood.



The Woodlands wide receiver Max Ward pushes back Kingwood's Chris Matz as he gains yards on the carry during Friday night's game.

By David Arno

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SHENANDOAH — In a tale of two halves Friday night, The Woodlands proved to be able to do just enough to pull out a win. In the battle for tops in District 14-5A, Kingwood overcame a 28-7 halftime deficit to give The Woodlands all it wanted. But a last minute onside kick didn't bounce the Mustangs' way as the Highlanders went on to win 41-35 on Friday night at Woodforest Bank Stadium

"The hardest thing for our kids to understand is that we walk around with a target on our backs every time we step out on the field, it's a big game for everybody," TWHS coach Mark Schmid said. "That was the case tonight. Kingwood came in and — you have to give credit to them, they did a great job offensively and made it very difficult on us — that'd what we're going to get from people. That's something we'll learn from tonight, and move on, and be better next week."

After scoring the game's first score, Kingwood (3-5, 3-1) was unable to keep up with the explosive Highlander offense the remainder of the first half. The Mustangs received the opening kickoff and scored after marching down the field 80 yards in 16 plays, resulting in a five yard Greg Williamson run.

With their next two scores, The Woodlands (8-0, 4-0) showed why it's one of the state's top teams. After Kingwood's game-opening drive lasted seven and a half minutes, Daniel Lasco scored twice in the next two and a half minutes, off of runs of three and two yards. With The Woodlands keying in on Kingwood's power-rushing attack, the Mustangs next drive stalled, and then on the Highlander's next drive, Lasco scored again on a one yard plunge up the middle.

The Woodlands added another score before the end of the first half when Joseph Schneider hit Max Ward, who took it 48 yards to put the Highlanders up 28-7. In the third quarter, after another lengthy drive failed for Kingwood, Ward scored on the ensuing punt return when he took it 67 yards to paydirt.

Kingwood kicked it into gear after that, though. The Mustangs would cut the Highlander to a single possession after three unanswered rushing touchdowns of three, 30, and 24 yards by Van Ross, Williamson and Kade Harrington.

The Woodlands got another score when Schneider hit Matt Lee from 18 yards, but the Ben Pruitt extra point was blocked, leaving them up 41-28.

An 80 yard, three and a half minute drive by Kingwood on the next possession put them within six points with only a minute and a half left in the game.

Looking to get the ball back and score the go-ahead touchdown, Kingwood wasn't able to recover the onside kick, and The Woodlands ran out the clock.

"We did what we had to do to pull out the win. I think the adjustments we made defensively were good," Schmid said. "Had we not misfired on a few possessions that could have resulted in scores, I think it could have taken the wind out of their sails and stopped their momentum. Very much like Lufkin, we had a dogfight on our hands."

With the win, The Woodlands sealed a spot in the playoffs, and now are looking to stay undefeated and win their second consecutive District 14-5A title.

"One of the things we wanted to accomplish was to clinch a playoff spot, remain undefeated, and have a chance to be undefeated at the end of the regular season. Schmid said. "We were able to move forward with those goals and get a spot in the playoffs and play for the whole shooting match and so those were some very positive things that happened."