

The Woodlands pushes nationally-ranked Dallas Skyline to brink, falls in state quarterfinals

Saturday, December 3, 2011

By Keith MacPherson

WACO – Dallas Skyline's RaShaad Samples broke up a Lance Miles pass on a fourth-and-7 with 29 seconds remaining in the Class 5A Division I state quarterfinals and The Woodlands faithful fell silent.

Samples' pass break up forced a turnover on downs with the Highlanders driving to take the lead and ensured Skyline a 35-31 win at Waco ISD Stadium on Saturday.

"It was an exciting game," The Woodlands coach Mark Schmid said. "It's disappointing that we fell short but I couldn't be more proud of our kids. Our guys did an awesome job all year long."

Skyline (14-0), ranked No. 9 in the nation by ESPN Rise, will play Southlake Carroll in the state semifinals at Ford Stadium in Dallas next weekend with a chance to play for a state championship.

After Skyline took the lead on a 1-yard touchdown run from quarterback Devante Kincade with 2 minutes and 59 seconds remaining, The Woodlands marched down to the Raiders' 29 with a chance to win it.

The Highlanders (12-2) would be forced into a fourth-and-22 and their season in the balance, before a pass interference call gave them new life with 30 second left.

Three Miles incompletions and a sack later, Skyline would take over on downs and would run out the clock from there.

"They knew with the amount of time we had left that we had to throw the football," Schmid said. "They tucked their ears back and the came. They brought the house and ran stunts and it gave us trouble."

Miles finished with 150 yards on 14 of 28 passing and a touchdown for the Highlanders.

The Woodlands wide receiver Blake Webb had five catches for 90 yards while also rushing three times for 28 yards, including a 5-yard second quarter touchdown.

Highlander running back Randy Cooper ran for 131 yards on 19 carries and a touchdown.

Cooper scored a third quarter touchdown from three-yards out to cap a 10-play, 69-yard drive and push The Woodlands' lead to 31-21.

"All year long (our running backs and offensive line) did a tremendous job," Schmid said. "We had a new offensive line, new running back and they got better every week. They took it upon themselves to prove they were a good unit and they were. We ran the ball real well tonight."

Skyline would respond with 14 unanswered fourth quarter points.

Skyline running back David Greene, a UNLV commit, rushed 15 times for 129 yards to lead the Raiders. Ellis Onic had nine carries for 78 yards and two touchdowns.

Onic scored on runs of 3 and 35 yards. His 35-yard touchdown was the first of back-to-back touchdowns on consecutive fourth quarter possessions that gave Skyline the lead.

The Woodlands led 24-14 at halftime over Skyline. It was the first time the Raiders trailed at halftime all season.

Kincade shook off a late first half interception with a 10-yard touchdown pass to Thomas Jonson midway through the third quarter.

Kincade finished with 85 yards on 10 of 17 passing. He also ran 15 times for 79 yards and two touchdowns.

Highlander defensive back Kolbi Brown set the tone early for The Woodlands' defense with a 66-yard interception return for a touchdown on the games opening drive.

Brown stepped in front of a Kincade pass and went untouched down the Skyline sideline to give the Highlanders a 7-0 lead with 8:05 left in the first quarter.

"That was big. We wanted to come out and have something good happen early for us," Schmid said. "Everyone made such a big deal about Skyline. And depending on where you looked, they were 15, 16-point favorites. I felt like if we had something good happen early, then it would be all our kids would need to get going."

Onic would answer Brown's score with a 3-yard touchdown run on the Raiders' next possession. Onic's touchdown capped a 10 play 80-yard drive and knotted the score up at 7 a piece.

Kincade converted a fourth-and-7 during Skyline's first scoring drive with a 21-yard touchdown run to set up a first-and-goal from The Woodlands' 10.

Webb would run it in from five yards out on an end-around to make it 14-7, capping a nine play, 68-yard drive in the Highlanders' first possession.

The Woodlands would force a three-and-out against the high-powered Skyline offense thanks in part to a false start penalty to begin the drive. Garrett Hope tackled Kincade for a two-yard gain on a read option play on a third-and-9 to force the punt.

Highlander kicker Marshall Bainton pushed The Woodlands' lead to 17-7 on 24-yard field goal with 8:01 left in the first half after its drive stalled at Skyline 7.

Skyline would respond with a nine-play, 69-yard touchdown drive following Bainton's field goal.

Kincade found some running room up the gut of the Highlander defense for an 8-yard touchdown run, making it 17-14 The Woodlands with 3:43 left to play in the first half.

The Woodlands marched to its own 45 in the drive following Kincade's 8-yard touchdown run but was forced to punt.

Miles boomed a 54-yard quick kick from an offensive formation and Webb would down it on the Skyline 1.

Pinned back at their 1, Kincade would throw up a deep ball under pressure. Highlander cornerback Lane LeBouef would run under the pass for an interception.

Miles would make the Raiders pay for the late turnover, finding Houston Brown on a slant route for an 11-yard touchdown to push the Highlander lead to 24-14 with 10 seconds left until intermission.

The loss ends a run for The Woodlands that saw the Highlanders advance past the second round of the playoffs for the first time since 2003 and become one of just three Highlander teams to ever reach the state quarterfinals.

Dallas Skyline shocks The Woodlands 35-31

By STEVEN THOMSON, FOR THE CHRONICLE
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WACO- Dallas Skyline stopped a late drive by The Woodlands to preserve a 35-31 win in Saturday's 5A Region II Division I championship game at Waco ISD Stadium.

The Highlanders (12-2) took an early 7-0 lead on a 66-yard interception return by [Kolbi Brown](#) with 8:05 left in the first quarter. After stretching the advantage to 17-7, the Woodlands never trailed until Skyline (14-0) put together two huge touchdown drives in the fourth quarter.

Ellis Onic scored on a 35-yard run with 10:24 remaining to play. After forcing a Highlander punt, the Raiders drove 80 yards in 12 plays to take a four-point lead with 2:59 left.

The Woodlands had one last possession, moving the ball from its 44 to the Skyline 28 with 1:08 remaining. The Raiders stood firm at that point, giving up a short run and knocking away a pair of passes to take over on downs.

"(Skyline) did some things different in the secondary (on the final drive)," Woodlands coach [Mark Schmid](#) said. "They really wanted to take away our top receiver ([Blake Webb](#)) and did some things to him.

"They did some things with their front. They brought (linebackers) and did a bunch of stunts. They came out and played."

Holding a 10-point lead late in the third quarter, the Highlanders marched to the Raider 29 before two incomplete passes and a fourth down sack forced a turnover on down.

Skyline got two big breaks on its final drive that allowed it to keep moving. Raider quarterback [Devante Kincade](#) escaped a sack on a third and 6 play and scrambled to pick up a first down at the Highlander 36. The Woodlands sacked Kincade for an 8-yard loss a few plays later, but that play was wiped out by a penalty that gave Skyline a first down at the [Highlander 5](#).

"When you have two good teams, turnovers, field position and mistakes get magnified," Schmid said. "That was part of what happened tonight."

The two teams traded offensive punches throughout the game. Unlike last week's win over Klein Oak, Skyline had to drive for its points as opposed to big plays.

The Woodlands moved the ball consistently behind quarterback [Lance Miles](#) and a big effort from the offensive line. That gained an advantage that lasted until the final minutes.

"We knew (Skyline) was a big play offense," Schmid said. "Defensively, our goal was to minimize big plays and make them work it down the field. We knew they would come out (in the second half) with their guns blazing. We needed to make a couple of stops. We were there, but Skyline made the plays."



Football: Highlanders let late lead slip away in 35-31 playoff loss to Skyline

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WACO – Playing against a team ranked first in the state and seventh in the country, there's no need for The Woodlands to hang its heads after losing a fourth-quarter lead.

But no doubt, the Highlanders will be hurting from this loss for a while.

Dallas Skyline scored with under three minutes left and stopped a late Highlander rally to take a 35-31 win in the Division I, Region II-5A final Saturday night at Waco ISD Stadium. The Woodlands led for most of the game, but could not get a big play late in the game to salt it away.

"If you watched (Skyline) last week (against Klein Oak), you saw that in the second half is where they pulled away," Highlander coach Mark Schmid said. "You knew they were going to come out with guns a blazing. We just needed to respond and get a couple of stops."

The Woodlands tried to stop the Raiders with less than nine minutes left in the game, but a 34-yard run by running back David Greene early in the drive got the offense going and got it to the Highlander 10-yard line. The defense did force a loss on a Greene run, but was wiped away on an offsides penalty. Then after holding them to four yards on three plays, quarterback Devante Kincade scored on fourth down to put Skyline ahead for the first time in the game.

On the Highlanders' ensuing possession, a penalty and a sack put them at fourth-and-22, but a pass interference penalty gave them life. But with under a minute remaining, the Raiders played tough pass coverage and knocked away three passes to end the game.

In the fourth quarter, Skyline brought a lot of pressure on quarterback Lance Miles and at the same time, tightened the coverage on receiver Blake Webb.

"They brought backers and a bunch of stunts, and they came out and played," Schmid said.

The first score came off of Skyline's first drive of the game, when a Kincade pass was intercepted by Highlander defensive back Kolbi Brown, who ran 66 yards down the sidelines for a touchdown.

Skyline recovered on its next possession, as the Raiders drove 80 yards on 11 plays, which included a 21-yard scramble by Kincade on a fourth down play. Running back Ellis Onic took it in from three yards out to tie the game at seven.

The Woodlands regained the lead on its next drive, relying on a 20-yard pass from Miles to Webb and a big run by running back Randy Cooper. Webb then scored on an end-around play from three yards out, just getting inside the pylon.

Marshall Bainton added a 24-yard field goal near the beginning of the second quarter to increase the Highlanders' lead to 10. But Skyline responded thanks to a couple of nice runs by Green that set up an 8-yard touchdown run by Kincade to make it 17-14.

With under a minute left in the half, Miles had a pooch punt that pinned the Raiders back at their own 1-yard line. Then an interception by defensive back Lane LeBouef gave The Woodlands great field position that resulted in an 11-yard touchdown strike from Miles to receiver Houston Brown to put the Highlanders up 24-14 at halftime.

Skyline (14-0) forced a three-and-out to start the third quarter and took five plays to score. Kincade found receiver Thomas Johnson for a 10-yard touchdown to cut the lead to three.

The Woodlands responded with an 11-play, 69-yard drive that featured Cooper getting runs of 13 and nine yards before scoring from three yards out to make it 31-21. On its next drive – thanks to a 35-yard pass from Miles to Webb – the Highlanders got as close as the Skyline 25 before a couple of incompletions and a screen play that was snuffed out by the Raider defense gave the ball back to Skyline on downs heading into the fourth quarter.

The Raiders began its fourth-quarter comeback with a big 35-yard touchdown run by Onic to cut the lead to 31-28. The Highlanders

“When we got to their 25 and we didn’t get anything out of it was a critical point in the game,” Schmid said. “Our kids did an awesome job. They played hard, came to practice every day excited, they liked the game and each other. This was a great year.”

Despite the disappointment, The Woodlands players have had a great season. A 13-1 record and advancing to the state quarterfinals after three straight years of being eliminated in the first or second rounds of the playoffs exceeded goals for the season.

But coming so close to making it to the state semifinals will be a feeling the players and coaches will ponder all offseason long.

“I’m extremely proud. I felt this was a winnable game for us, and we let it slip away,” Schmid said. “I can’t fault the effort that was there, but at certain points, they just had better people on the field.”