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The Woodlands gets defensive in rout of Oak Ridge

By Jason McDaniel | October 24, 2014

SHENANDOAH – Another linebacker down, no problem.

The Woodlands, which lost standout linebacker Corey Sanders to a broken arm earlier this season, saw LB Zak Yglecias go down with an injury in practice this week, forcing it to call on Grant Milton. The sophomore responded with a fumble recovery and a sack, helping the Highlanders' defense stifle Oak Ridge for a 33-6 win Friday at Woodforest Stadium in a key District 16-6A showdown.

"They played great all night long," The Woodland coach Mark Schmid said. "Coming into the game, Oak Ridge was the No. 1 offense in our district, and so we felt like they were a very balanced offense, running and throwing, and we knew we were going to have a big job ahead of us. Hats off to our kids. They played outstanding tonight."

The Woodlands (7-1, 4-0) pulled away in the third, with running back Patrick Carr notching touchdown runs of 56 and three yards, giving it a 24-0 advantage with 4:27 showing in the quarter. Carr finished with 143 yards and three TDs on 21 rushes.

"We really hurt ourselves a lot in the first half," Schmid said. "We got some short fields early from our defense, and then we had a tough time stringing together plays to make a drive – untimely penalties, holding and things like that.

"And that's what we talked about at halftime – cleaning things up and being more efficient. And the kids did a great job coming out and doing that."

Oak Ridge notched its first score with 49 seconds left in the third when Kawme Etwi dove over the goalline for an 8-yard TD. But The Woodlands answered with a 5-yard scoring pass from quarterback Chris Andritsos to Kalif Johnson, which was set up by Chris Bell's 67-yard run on a reverse.

Milton's fumble recovery came after Carr's 56-yard TD run, when Oak Ridge was trying to stay close. He also sacked Braden Letney late in the fourth.

"Grant stepped up," Schmid said. "(He) came off of our JV team and did a great job for us."

Etwi rushed for 111 yards, but the Eagles averaged only 4.1 yards per carry and Letney completed only 11 of 30 passes. They finished with 256 total yards.

The Eagles punted on five of six possessions in the first half, went three-and-out three times and lost a fumble on a bad exchange on their second series.

Horton fell on the fumble, and the Highlanders reached Oak Ridge's 1 – with help from two pass interferences – but they settled for Nacho Garcia's 19-yard field goal after the Eagles stiffened. That score gave The Woodlands a 10-0 lead with 2:40 left in the first quarter.

The Highlanders finished with 411 yards, most of that on the ground (310 on 42 rushes). Andritsos completed 12 of 22 passes for 101 yards and one TD in his first start for an injured Matt Bonaguidi (ankle).

"He continues to get better," Schmid said. "After being out for all of the summer and the first couple of games, he continues to get better."

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Carr, The Woodlands storm past Oak Ridge 33-6

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By Jon Poorman

SHENANDOAH — The Woodlands improved to 11-0 all-time against Oak Ridge on Friday evening, defeating the War Eagles 33-6 at Woodforest Bank Stadium behind an impressive performance from running back Patrick Carr.

Carr rushed for 143 yards and had touchdown runs of three, 56 and three yards, respectively, to lead the Highlanders (7-1, 4-0) to a crucial District 16-6A victory over the War Eagles (6-3, 3-2).

"It's a big win for us because it does a lot of things," The Woodlands coach Mark Schmid said. "It puts us in the playoffs — that win does — and it's one step closer to being the outright district champion, which is a big goal for our kids.

"It was a playoff-type atmosphere, so to come away with a win dealing with all that stuff is good."

The Woodlands, which boasted the district's top defense entering the contest, held Oak Ridge's high-powered offense to just 256 yards. It was the fifth time in eight games that the Highlanders held their opponent to single-digit points.

"They played great all night long, and coming into the game, Oak Ridge was the No. 1 offense in our district," Schmid said. "We felt like they were a very balanced offense, running and throwing, and we knew that we were going to have a big, big job ahead of us. Hats off to our kids. They played outstanding tonight."

The Highlanders got the scoring started on their first drive of the game, traveling 64 yards in 11 plays to take the 7-0 advantage. Carr looked like he was going to be stopped short of the goal line, but the senior tailback bounced the run outside and found just enough daylight for a 3-yard score on fourth and one.

"That was good because we started paving the road," Carr said. "If we don't start fast and keep it going, it's going hurt us in the end. It was more of us just getting after it. We knew we had to start fast in this game because those guys over there (Oak Ridge), they're talented, very talented."

Nacho Garcia gave The Woodlands a 10-0 lead later in the quarter, connecting on a 19-yard field goal with 2:40 to play. The score was set up by an Oak Ridge fumble that linebacker Tristan Horton recovered at the War Eagles' 35.

The Highlanders looked like they were going to make it 17-0 when Carr ripped off a 56-yard touchdown jaunt with about five minutes to play in the first half. The run, however, was called back on a holding penalty.

Carr found redemption on the second play of the third quarter, though, busting through the middle of the War Eagles' defense for another 56-yard touchdown run. This time, it stood.

"We really hurt ourselves a lot in the first half," Schmid said. "We got some short fields early from our defense, and then we had a tough time stringing together plays to make a drive — untimely penalties, holding, and things like that. That's what we talked about at halftime: cleaning things up and being more efficient. The kids did a great job coming out and doing that."

Carr added to his impressive performance later in the third when he scored on a three-yard plunge to give the Highlanders a 24-0 lead. It was his 11th touchdown run of the season.

Oak Ridge got its first points on the board with 49 seconds left in the period when Kwame Etwi found paydirt from eight yards out. Quarterback Braden Letney was sacked on the two-point conversion try, however, and the score remained 24-6.

Etwi led Oak Ridge with 111 yards on 19 carries. The senior running back has hit triple digits in all nine of the War Eagles' games. Oak Ridge as a team, however, ended the game a long way from its season average of 384 yards per game.

"The first half, the kids played hard, and they competed," Oak Ridge coach Dereck Rush said. "We have to limit our turnovers, and we didn't do a good job of moving the football."

"It wasn't so much what the defense did to us, it was what we did to ourselves — not keeping the bodies on bodies as far as the offensive line is concerned, missing a couple of open receivers — those type of things."

The Woodlands stifled any momentum the War Eagles gained on its next drive when Chris Bell took a reverse 67 yards down to the Oak Ridge three-yard line. Chris Andritsos connected with Kalif Johnson on a five-yard touchdown pass three plays later for the 30-6 advantage. Garcia added an 18-yard field goal with 4:55 to play to cap the scoring.



The Highlanders run free, smash through War Eagles, 33-6

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SHENANDOAH, Texas- In a matchup that featured the top defense (The Woodlands) and top offense (Oak Ridge) in district 16-6A, it was the top defense that shined the brightest, winning by a margin of 33-6. The Woodlands (7-1, 4-0) moves to 11-0 all time against Oak Ridge, with no margin of victory being less than 17 points (38-21 in 2009).

“It was a big win for us,” said Woodlands Head Coach Mark Schmid. “It does a lot of things for us. It puts us in the playoffs, and it’s one step closer to being outright district champion, which is a big goal for our kids. The atmosphere was electric, playoff type atmosphere.”

Leading the way for The Woodlands was running back Patrick Carr, who rested toward the end of the game. He finished his night with 21 carries for 143 yards and three touchdowns. He is 82 yards away from having 1,000 rushing yards on the season. Quarterback Chris Andritsos threw for 101 yards and a score, and ran for another 47 yards. The Woodlands finished with 411 total yards on the evening, including 310 via the rush.

For Oak Ridge, Kwame Etwi lead the charge, going for 111 yards on 19 carries and a score. Etwi has eclipsed the 100-yard mark in every game this season. Quarterback Braden Letney threw for 140 yards, and wide receiver Riley McKnight caught five balls for 64 yards. Oak Ridge finished with 256 yards of total offense.

Oak Ridge (6-3, 3-2) received the opening kickoff and went three-and-out, giving the Highlanders the ball at their own 36-yard line on their first possession. Chris Andritsos was the starter to open the game at quarterback for The Woodlands, but the Highlanders promptly ran the ball with Carr for a 12-yard gain on the first play of their drive. After Andritsos hit wide receiver Hunter Moore for nine yards, The Woodlands moved into Oak Ridge territory to the 38-yard line. After Andritsos keepers of 14-yards and 8-yards, the ball sat at the 16-yard line. After three more runs, the Highlanders looked at a fourth-and-1 from the Oak Ridge three-yard line and didn’t blink, deciding to go for it and handing the ball off to Carr. He was stopped short initially, but kept grinding and moving his feet, eventually wiggling free from the defense for a three-yard score, giving the Highlanders the early edge, 7-0, with 7:05 left in the first quarter.

After the ensuing kickoff, Oak Ridge would move the ball to the 25-yard line, and the second play of the series saw Etwi almost break loose. However before he was gone a shoestring tackle clipped him, stopping him after a nine-yard gain to the 36-yard line, which good for a fresh set of downs. Unfortunately for the War Eagles, the drive was

short-lived as the next play saw a botched center/quarterback exchange and the fumble was recovered by Highlander linebacker Tristan Horton at the Oak Ridge 35-yard line.

“Defense played great all night long,” said Schmid. “Coming in, Oak Ridge was the number one offense in the district, so we felt like they were a very balanced offense. Hats off to our kids, they played outstanding tonight.”

After a pass-interference on Oak Ridge and a keeper for Andritsos, the ball was down to the War Eagle 12-yard line just like that. A spot foul in the end zone put the ball at the two-yard line, but a bad snap immediately moved the ball back to the 15-yard line. An Andritsos-to-wide receiver-Mason Wuensch completion of 14-yards made it third-and-goal at the one, and a big play was forthcoming. Carr got the handoff, but defensive tackle John Williams was ready and met Carr at the point of attack and drove him back, preventing a touchdown. A 19-yard field goal by Nacho Garcia was successful and upped the score to 10-0 with 2:40 left in the first quarter.

The third series for Oak Ridge showed a more steady offensive flow. After an Etwi run, Riley McKnight catch, and another Etwi run, the War Eagles had moved the ball for two first downs to their own 43-yard line. After an Etwi first down run on third-and-3 to start the second quarter, the War Eagles had the ball into Highlander territory for the first time tonight, down to their 47-yard line. However the drive stalled with a run of one yard and two incomplete passes, and Oak Ridge punted the ball to the Highlander 5-yard line.

The Woodlands first two plays on their drive went no where, and on third-and-9 from their 6-yard line, wide receiver Kalif Johnson caught a screen pass that was behind him and appeared to be stopped short. Despite being swarmed, Johnson remained balanced and broke three tackles to eventually pick up 15-yards and get a valuable first down to help get The Woodlands out of their own end zone. The momentum from that play didn't carry over though, and the Highlanders punted after their next series, giving Oak Ridge the ball at their own 38-yard line with 8:42 left in the half.

On second-and-10 from Oak Ridge's 38-yard line on their next possession, Letney and McKnight tried to trick the Highlander defense with a stutter-and-go pass. Letney pump-faked the throw short and tricked the defense, with McKnight breaking free, however the pass was slightly overthrown and couldn't be hauled in. The third down play fell short, and Oak Ridge had to punt back to The Woodlands, giving them the ball at their 22-yard line with 7:32 left in the half.

The War Eagles and Highlanders would then trade three-and-outs, and with 1:33 left in the half the score remained 10-0, with Oak Ridge in possession at their own 16-yard line. After a sack by linebacker Geoff Keating for -13 yards, Oak Ridge was backed up on a third-and-22 from their own 18-yard line with 59 seconds left in the half. With neither team in position to make a play, the teams would run down the clock and go into the locker rooms with The Woodlands leading Oak Ridge, 10-0, at halftime.

The first series out of the locker room gave the Highlanders the ball at their 38-yard line. After a wide receiver Chris Stewart jet sweep of six yards, Carr got the handoff and went 56-yards untouched down the field for a quick strike. This was Carr's second 56-yard touchdown run of the game, but the first one was negated due to a hold. With this run standing, only 22 seconds into the second half the lead had opened up to 17-0 The Woodlands. Oak Ridge also looked crisper on their first possession out of the locker room. A 26-yard run by Etwi got the ball up to the War Eagle 45-yard line and they appeared to be moving the ball down the field, however, a third-and-3 snap just inside Highlander territory sailed over Letney's head and ended up back at Oak Ridge's 23-yard line, and was recovered by Highlander linebacker Grant Milton.

“Milton stepped up, came off our junior varsity team and did a great job tonight for us,” said Schmid.

With the game teetering on becoming out of hand, the defense didn't fret for Oak Ridge and stood strong. After three plays netted four total yards, the Highlanders were looking at a fourth-and-6 from the 19-yard line. The Woodlands would go for it and the pass was complete to Wuensch, but he was stopped a yard short of the line to gain, and Oak Ridge took possession at their 15-yard line with over eight minutes left in the third quarter.

Oak Ridge would quickly go three-and-out on their drive, and after getting the ball at midfield, Carr was loose again. A 23-yard carry down the sideline on the first handoff of the drive moved the ball to Oak Ridge's 27-yard line. A big fourth-and-3 from Oak Ridge's 20-yard line was complete to Stewart, and he broke a tackle to get the ball to Oak Ridge's three yard line. The next play was a toss to Carr, and he did what he does so well, bulldozing the defense across the goal line to make the score 24-0 Highlanders with 4:27 left in the third quarter. Carr was up to 20 carries for 141 yards and three touchdowns at this point in the game.

Etwi continued to run hard for Oak Ridge no matter the score, and after a run of nine yards netted a first down for the War Eagles, the ball had moved to Oak Ridge's 44-yard line. A deep pass thrown beautifully downfield to McKnight for 38-yards got the ball to the Highlander 22-yard line, and Oak Ridge was threatening. Two more Etwi runs got a fresh set of downs at the Highlander 12-yard line, and the War Eagles were looking to get on the board quickly. On a third-and-goal from the eight, Etwi made two Highlanders miss and got to the corner, extending the ball over the pylon just before going out of bounds for the touchdown. Oak Ridge went for a two-point conversion but was unsuccessful, making the score 24-6 with 49 seconds left in the third quarter.

The first play of the Highlanders next drive was a double reverse to Chris Bell that worked to perfection, and with Andritsos as a lead blocker Bell seemed to have the whole field available to score. As Bell past the defense and looked clear for the touchdown, he appeared to lose his balance and went down at the Oak Ridge three-yard line and was touched down. After a few plays and a penalty moved the ball back, a third-and-goal from the five yard line saw Andritsos scramble and hit Johnson in the back of the end zone for a sliding catch, upping the lead to 30-6 Highlanders (PAT missed) with 10:52 left in the contest.

Oak Ridge drove on the next series but couldn't complete a fourth down pass, giving the ball back to the Highlanders. The Highlanders moved the ball down to Oak Ridge's one yard line with good scampers by running back Adam May, but on 4th-and-goal they kicked a 19-yard field goal by Nacho Garcia to make the score 33-6 Highlanders with 4:55 left to play. The two teams played out the clock from this point forward, ending the game 33-6 in favor of The Woodlands.

"The kids played hard; they competed," said War Eagle Head Coach Dereck Rush. "We have to limit our turnovers and do a better job of moving the football. It's what we did to ourselves tonight."

Oak Ridge will get a chance to rest up through Halloween weekend before closing out the district schedule on Thursday, November 6, at 7:00 p.m., at Woodforest Bank Stadium. After that, seeds will become official, with the War Eagles still in good position to make the playoffs.

The Woodlands, which has clinched a playoff spot, will take to the road to battle Summer Creek next Friday. They will then close out their district slate of games against Kingwood on Saturday, November 8, at 4:00 p.m., at Woodforest Bank Stadium, before shifting their concentration to the playoffs.