

# The Woodlands defense stifles Dekaney Wildcats

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SHENANDOAH, Texas -- Zak Yglecias, Antoine Winfield, Jr., Connor Binney and company on defense for The Woodlands Highlanders (2-0) tamed the Dekaney Wildcats 34-7 Thursday night at Woodforest Bank Stadium.

Ask any level of Defensive Coordinator and they'll tell you the defense is always ahead of the offense at the beginning of a football season. The Woodlands is an excellent example as they single-handedly opened up this game early on an Yglecias 44-yard pick-6 with 8:57 left in the opening quarter. Then, after both teams traded punts,

defensive back, Antoine Winfield, Jr. was Johnny-on-the-spot in recovering an airborne fumble at the 32 yard line when his speed took the pigskin to the end zone for a Highlander two-touchdown lead, 14-0.

The Woodlands offense was slow in getting going and were forced to punt by way of a perfect 50 yard "quick kick" by Eric Schmid that was downed at the two yard line. However, it was later ruled a touchback after the referees commiserated on the field.

A pair of carries by Dekaney quarterback, Adrian Hardy, put the Wildcats on the 30 when on the next play, Hardy threw a wounded duck that managed to travel past The Woodlands secondary into the waiting arms of wide-out Aaron Cephus who ran untouched for a 70 yard TD and it was a football game again, 14-7.

On the ensuing kickoff, return man Christopher Stewart turned the corner for 49 yards but was gang tackled out of bounds which tacked on an additional 15 yards, which put the Highlanders in business on the Dekaney 35 yard line. On 2nd and 11, Schmid threw a short pass to Stewart, who seemed to have been stopped, but with second and third efforts, the wide-out toughed out enough yardage for a first down. The drive would eventually stall after a 4th down pass from Schmid to Patrick connected but was ruled incomplete as Patrick landed out of bounds.

The Woodlands defense forced Dekaney to punt on their next possession. Winfield, Jr. took full advantage with a creative 28 yard return. On the play, it appeared as if he had been tackled but he landed on top of a Dekaney player. The heady Winfield, Jr. advanced the ball another 15 yards.

Schmid was ready to roll and threw a 17 yard fastball to Hunter Moore with 1:01 remaining in the half. The Highlanders were able to advance the ball to the 13 and settled for a Charles Gingras 30 yard field goal. The teams went into their locker rooms with the score 17-7, The Woodlands.

The third quarter was a bit slow until Winfield, Jr. stripped the ball from Hardy at the Dekaney three yard line with under a minute to go.

To start the 4th quarter, the Highlanders couldn't get into the end zone after a 3rd and goal Schmid pass to Patrick fell incomplete in the end zone. Gingras, who has been perfect, split the uprights for a 20-7 lead.

Following the kickoff, Dekaney tried to get something going but Hardy threw an ill-advised pass out wide that Highlander cornerback, Connor Binney, stole from Cephus then made a B-line to the end zone and another pick-6 for The Woodlands making the score, 27-7.

The final score of the game was a jewel of a run by Schmid around left end as he glided to the end zone. Senior kicker, Lucas Vieth, kicked the extra point for the final tally of the game.

If the Highlander defense was collectively the #1 star of the night, you can give The Woodlands Special Teams Unit the 2nd star. Whether they were pinning Dekaney deep in their own territory by way of punting or kicking, they were tackling like gangbusters all night long.

"Defense played an outstanding job," Woodlands Head Coach Mark Schmid said. "Going into the game I felt like turnovers would be a key point for us determining the outcome of the game, as well as the kicking game would be a big factor. And lo and behold, we got three defensive scores out of the defense and they did a great job of keeping Dekaney out of the endzone."

Binney was ecstatic with his pick-6 but was all about the team after the game.

"It was right there for me and I just had to execute," Binney said. "We practice hard and I'm expected to make that play. We're playing good now but have to get better every week especially because we have Katy next week. This team plays well together. I like our chances against anyone."

Schmid threw six times for 98 yards as the Dekaney defense was just as impressive in allowing only one offensive TD. For Dekaney, Hardy gained 28 yards rushing and threw for 107 yards on the stubborn Highlander defense.

## Highlanders shut down Dekaney 34-7



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By **Demetrio Teniente**

SHENANDOAH — Don't let the final score fool you.

The Woodlands 34-7 win over Dekaney Thursday night at Woodforest Stadium was a defensive battle.

Aside from one play— a 69-yard bomb from the Wildcats' Adrian Hardy to Aaron Cephus— the Highlander defense dominated Dekaney, forcing three turnovers that were returned for touchdowns.

The rout pushes the Highlanders' record to 2-0, heading into next week's showdown on the road against traditional power Katy at Rhodes Stadium.

For now, though, the Highlanders could savor their second victory of the season.

"The turnovers were huge," The Woodlands coach Mark Schmid said. "I think our defensive front was outstanding. We knew they were going to run the football.

"Adrian Hardy is pretty dangerous in space and I thought for the most part we did a great job of tackling in space."

Hardy finished the game with only 29 yards rushing. He had 108 yards passing on the night, but threw two interceptions and lost a fumble.

All three of Hardy's turnovers resulted in defensive touchdowns.

Two of those came in the first quarter. First, Linebacker Zak Yglecias picked off a pass from Hardy in the flats and took it 44 yards to the house—giving TWHS a 7-0 lead in the first quarter.

Early in the fourth quarter, defensive back Connor Binney delivered the final blow with a 33-yard interception return for yet another score.

“Tonight was big,” Winfield said. “Especially for the team. We went through some adversity at first, but we did good as a team. “

Over the first two games, The Woodlands has allowed just 14 points. Winfield believes this defense has unlimited potential.

“They voted me a team captain for a reason,” Winfield said. “I’m just here to lead them to the state Championship.”

Though not nearly as opportunistic, the Wildcats’ defense was just as stifling in the first half and limited The Woodlands to just 87 total yards.

“That defense we faced tonight is a stout defense,” Schmid said. “We’ll face some other tough ones, but that maybe one of the best that we’ve seen.”

In his second start of the season, Eric Schmid finished the game with 97 yards on 6 completions, but broke free for a 32 yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter—The Woodlands only offensive touchdown of the night.

“It was a read where I wasn’t supposed to throw it,” Eric said. “I just made a move and got in the end zone—finally.”

The Woodlands will take their 2-0 record and their stingy defense on the road next week to try and beat Katy in its own backyard on September 11.