

THE COURIER

OF MONTGOMERY  COUNTY



The Woodlands tops Oak Ridge for 27th straight district win

By Jon Poorman
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SHENANDOAH - The Woodlands has knocked its opponent from the ranks of the unbeaten for the second consecutive week.

The Highlanders handed Oak Ridge its first loss of the season on Friday night at Woodforest Bank Stadium, using a stout defensive performance and a balanced attack on offense to pull away in the second half for a convincing 49-14 victory.

The Woodlands defeated previously unbeaten West Brook last week as well, and now has sole possession of first place in the District 12-6A standings. The Highlanders (4-1, 3-0) have won 27 consecutive league games and improved their all-time mark against Oak Ridge (6-1, 3-1) to 14-0.

"It's big, huge because it does a lot of things for you," The Woodlands coach Mark Schmid said of the win. "It puts you in the driver's seat - you control your own destiny. We want to be the No. 1 seed going into the playoffs, so we've taken a step closer to clinching [that]. ... I was pleased with the way

the kids played."

The Woodlands' offense kept Oak Ridge off balance all night, finishing with 286 yards passing and 229 rushing for a total of 515. Quarterback Quinton Johnson was efficient, going 19-for-26 for 281 yards. He also rushed for 44 yards and connected on a pair of touchdown passes.

Oak Ridge was without starting quarterback Reinard Britz, as well as a slew of other key players. But despite the loss, coach Dereck Rush is confident his team will respond in a positive way.

"I think overall tonight, the kids fought," he said. "They fought until the very end, so we can build off that and get better. ... We had some key injuries there, but there's no excuse. We'll get better."

The Woodlands moved the ball well on its first possession, but after a 31-yard completion from Johnson to Kesean Carter down the Oak Ridge 2, the ball was ripped out by defensive back Robert Barteo. The War Eagles' junior then sprinted 54 yards up the right sideline to put his team in Highlander territory.

Oak Ridge was able to cash in on the turnover later in the possession, taking a 7-0 lead on a 1-yard touchdown plunge by linebacker Brennan Young.

The Woodlands fired back on the ensuing drive as Lucas Summers reached paydirt up the middle on a 3-yard run. Bryeton Gilford then gave the Highlanders their first lead of the game early in the second quarter with a 5-yard touchdown, a score that was set up by a 43-yard completion from Johnson to Carter. Gilford finished with a team-high 89 yards rushing.

The Woodlands added to its advantage with just 23 seconds remaining in the first half, as Johnson rolled out to his left and found Connor Klapesky for a 3-yard touchdown. Klapesky was a difference-maker for the Highlanders in the first half, collecting seven catches for 121 yards and the score.

"Connor had a big night tonight," Schmid said. "He stepped up big - he's the other slot. Without Kesean last week and during practice this week, we placed a big emphasis on Connor, and he certainly answered the bell tonight. Real pleased with his performance."

The Woodlands came out strong in the third quarter with an 89-yard drive on its opening possession. Johnson capped the journey with a 24-yard touchdown pass to Zayne Watson.

"It was huge," Johnson said. "We've talked about it all year, coming out and setting the tone. It was good to set the tone in the first half, and then to come out and continue that in the second half was really good for us."

Gilford found the end zone on a 4-yard run late in the period, and backup quarterback Casey Sunseri dove to the left pylon on a 9-yard score early in the fourth to make the score 42-7.

Tanner Lacy provided some fireworks for the War Eagles with about six minutes to play, taking a swing pass 59 yards to the house for his sixth touchdown of the season.

But the Highlanders put the final exclamation point on the game with 2:11 remaining as Kyle Trauffer returned an interception 97 yards for a touchdown.

"The mindset is always about the next team," Johnson said. "We've got to focus and go week by week."



Bryeton Gilford and Highlanders hand Oak Ridge first loss of the season



By: J.C. Cartagena, Woodlands Online Sports

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THE WOODLANDS, TX-- The battle of the district 12-6A unbeaten was underway at Woodforest Bank Stadium Friday night as the Oak Ridge War Eagles played host to The Woodlands Highlanders.

The War Eagles saw their third starting quarterback under center when junior Blaine Romero was given the nod. Former

starter quarterback, and Woodlands Online Athlete of the Week, Reinard Britz was suited up on the sideline but apparently still dealing with an injury. Another previous starter Bishop Durst saw some action at defensive back for the War Eagles. While Romero was able to find some success finding wideout Darrius Jelks for a couple of big first downs, it was the play of Quinton Johnson for the Highlanders that stole the show.

The Highlanders jumped to a quick 21-7 lead going into halftime. In place for the injured Quinn Binney, Quinton Johnson was named the starter for the third week in a row. Johnson had Texas Tech commit Kesean Carter back from a groin injury that caused him to miss last week's win against West Brook. With Carter back in the lineup, it was receiver Connor Klapesky finishing his first half with 106 yards and a touchdown. Sophomore running back Bryeton Gilford added to the Highlanders explosive offense with 94 yards and two touchdowns and named our Player of the Game for his performance.

The second half opened with a 90-yard drive for the Highlanders, capped off by Quinton Johnson finding a wide-open Zayne Watson for a 24-yard score. Johnson finished his night with 315 total yards and two touchdowns. Early in the fourth quarter, Highlanders up by 28, junior quarterback

Casey Sunseri dove for the pylon for a 10-yard touchdown to extend the Highlanders lead to 42-7. On the ensuing drive, Romero found Tanner Lacy for a 59-yard touchdown to attempt to end the War Eagles offensive struggles. With a little over two minutes remaining, the Highlander defense added to the scoring as Kyle Trauffler intercepts Romero and returns it 83-yards for the touchdown.

The Highlanders move to 3-0 in district play while Oak Ridge suffers first loss of the season to bring their record to 3-1. The Highlanders will host the Conroe Tigers next Friday Oct. 27 at Woodforest Bank Stadium while Oak Ridge will travel to Lufkin and attempt to bounce back after their first loss of the season.