

# THE COURIER

OF MONTGOMERY  COUNTY



## Klein Collins tops The Woodlands with stop on final play

By Jon Poorman  
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KLEIN — Klein Collins dons the crown once again. The Tigers wrapped up at least a share of the District 15-6A title with a dramatic 20-13 victory over The Woodlands at Memorial Stadium on Friday evening.

Klein Collins went ahead for good on a 2-yard touchdown plunge from quarterback Colby Powers with 2:19 to play in the fourth quarter. The Woodlands drove deep into Tigers territory with the clock winding down, but the defense stood tall on the final play of the game, stuffing the Highlanders at the 1-yard line.

“Our kids are fighters,” Klein Collins coach Adrian Mitchell said. “Our kids are fighters, they believe in each other, and they bowed their necks right there like no other.”

Klein Collins (9-1, 7-1) has now won five consecutive league championships and can clinch the outright title with a loss by Klein Oak next Thursday night against Klein Cain.

The Tigers have a bye for the final week of the regular season before diving into the Class 6A Division II playoffs. Klein Collins, ranked No. 11 in the latest Houston-area media poll, will be making its 10th playoff appearance in 11 seasons and second in as many years under Mitchell.

“We’ve got a pretty tough district, and we’re battling every week,” Mitchell said. “It’s SEC-type football with some smash-mouth teams. There’s not a week off, and you have to be ready for that.”

Woodlands (5-4, 4-3) will have to wait one more week for a chance to lock up its 25th consecutive playoff berth. The Highlanders play host to winless Klein Forest to close out the regular season.

“We control our destiny,” The Woodlands coach Jim Rapp said. “This didn’t turn out the way we wanted it to turn out, but we still have a chance to control our own destiny and get a win. As long as everything plays out the way it should, we’ll have a chance to be in the playoffs.”

The Woodlands drew first blood against Klein Collins. The Highlanders put a touchdown on the board with just one minute remaining in the opening period as receiver Teddy Knox scored on a 9-yard direct snap run.

Tanner Ward finally broke the shutout for the Tigers with six minutes to play in the second quarter, connecting on a field goal from 34 yards out after the defense delivered a key turnover. Linebacker Ben Purifoy corralled a fumble at the Highlanders’ 21-yard line to put Klein Collins within range for the senior kicker.

The Tigers looked like they would take the lead on a 21-yard touchdown run from Braelon Bridges with the clock winding down before the intermission, but the play was called back on a penalty. Instead, the home team settled for a 44-yard field goal attempt from Ward, but the kick fell short with five seconds remaining.

“You can’t sustain a drive if you’re starting with first-and-15 because of a mental error,” Mitchell said. “Or to have something rolling and then get a sack. Those negative plays really set us back in the first half. We didn’t eliminate them in the second half, but we reduced them, and we were able to get some things chugging along.”

Despite not officially scoring a touchdown, Bridges led the Tigers’ rushing attack with 173 yards on 27 carries. That efficiency helped his team put more points on the board in the second half, starting with a 30-yard field goal from Ward midway through the third quarter. The Woodlands countered with a

40-yarder from Fabrizio Pinton, however, which handed the Highlanders a 10-6 advantage heading into the final period.

The Tigers finally took their first lead of the game at 13-10 with eight minutes to play in the fourth quarter as Powers plowed his way into the end zone from 3 yards out. The Woodlands drew even a few minutes later as Pinton connected on a 39-yard field goal, but the Tigers' final possession of the night — a drive that consumed 75 yards over three minutes — ended with Powers crossing the goal line for the game-winning touchdown.

Knox had a 44-yard reception on the Highlanders' final possession, giving his team a chance. The Woodlands snapped the ball to the junior speedster from the 3-yard line on the last play of the game as well, but the Tigers rose to the challenge and made the tackle as Knox attempted to push across the goal line.

"We've got a good football team," Rapp said. "We executed a deep pass, and we had a chance late. We got the ball close, but we've got to be able to finish. Offensively, we just needed to finish that drive. We gave ourselves a chance to get back in it. That's a good football team over there. Klein Collins did some good things tonight. We'll learn from the game and come back next week ready to go."