

THE COURIER

OF MONTGOMERY  COUNTY

The Woodlands tops Spring with dominant defense

By Jason McDaniel
Saturday, November 16, 2019



SPRING — Throw the records out the window.

Spring entered the playoffs as the better team on paper, but The Woodlands still is The Woodlands, even in a “down” year, and it rose up Saturday, dominating Spring for a 17-0 win at Planet Ford Stadium.

“When you get in the playoffs, everybody’s 0-0,” The Woodlands coach Jim Rapp said. “And we had an unbelievably tough district. This football team has persevered through a lot of injuries, and we knew going in we had a good football team. We just had to find out who was going to play on game day.”

The unranked Highlanders, now 7-4 on the year, will face Cypress Woods (8-3) next week in the Class 6A Division 1 Region II area round, where they’ve played in four of the last five seasons.

They'll meet at 7 p.m. Friday at Cy-Fair FCU Stadium.

"The hardest victory is the first one, because nobody knows," Rapp said. "Once you get one, you know what it feels like, you know what it takes, and everybody has a little more buy-in because they're fired up."

The Lions (8-3) end their season in the first round for the third straight year.

Spring quarterbacks Aldyn Bradley and Bishop Davenport each threw a touchdown pass to their brother in the first game at Planet Ford Stadium. They both threw passes to The Woodlands cornerback Carter Doucet in this one. The senior picked Bradley on the third play of the game, leading to the game's first score — eventually.

The Woodlands went three-and-out despite starting at Spring's 45, but the punt pinned the Lions at their 2. They ended up punting from their end zone, and Doucet — again making a big play — returned it 15 yards to the Spring 16. Officials tacked on another five yards for the Lions' illegal formation.

Four plays later, quarterback Ben Mills kept for a 2-yard score on fourth-and-1 and the 7-0 lead. The Woodlands started its first three drives in Spring territory as the Lions struggled to find any kind of rhythm on offense. They tried to flip the field with a fake punt on fourth-and-17 from their own 23 on their third possession, but Cadyn Bradley ran for only 16 yards before flipping out of bounds. The Highlanders took over at Spring's 39 and scored again eight plays later.

Mills looked to receiver Cole Dodson in the end zone on third-and-8, and Dodson went up and secured the ball for a 9-yard score and 14-0 advantage with 53 seconds remaining in the first quarter. Spring finally moved into The Woodlands territory on its ensuing drive, but after reaching the 10-yard line, it went for the touchdown on fourth-and-2, and linebacker Blane Corekin hit Aldyn Bradley for a loss.

Bishop Davenport came in for the final three plays of Spring's next series — after an Aldyn Bradley fumble — but didn't fare better, taking a sack on the second snap and throwing a pick to Doucet on the third. The Woodlands led 14-0 at halftime.

"(Doucet) really had a great game," Rapp said. "He had some issues, had a death in the family and wasn't around for a couple days of practice — so I guess practice is overrated — but at the same time, we were there for him and happy he was able to go and be with his family and still have a great day."

The Lions turned the ball over on downs four times in the second half. They ran three plays from The Woodlands' 1 midway through the fourth, but the Highlanders turned them back every time for a big goal line stand.

Spring finished with only 205 total yards with two turnovers.

"Our defense has played 11 straight solid football games," Rapp said. "They are unbelievable, so I'm not surprised at all. They did a great job with the motion and the formations of Spring and covering guys, and our defensive front put a lot of pressure on the quarterback, so I'm really fired up about them."

The Woodlands generated only 175 yards and managed only a 36-yard Fabrizio Pinton field goal in the second half, but cruised to the win by taking advantage of short fields early and stout defense late.

"We've got to score," Rapp said. "We have opportunities. We can't throw interceptions, and we can't rely on field goals. I was not fired up with the way we ran the ball in the second half. We have to be better, we are better, and we'll tighten some things up and work on a really tough Cy Woods team for next week."