

The Woodlands rolls past Lamar at home

By Jon Poorman, Staff writer
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SHENANDOAH — After managing just three points last week, The Woodlands was due for some scoring. The Highlanders, ranked No. 19 in the latest Class 6A Houston Area Media Poll, did just that and took care of business in their home opener with a 40-14 non-district victory over Lamar at Woodforest Bank Stadium Friday night.

The two teams were playing for the third consecutive season. The Texans (0-1) won the first contest two years ago, and The Woodlands emerged victorious last time around. It was all Highlanders (1-1) in the rubber match as the home team leaned on a steady offensive attack and stingy defense. The Woodlands began its campaign with a 21-3 loss against Pearland last Friday.

“Last week wasn’t fun for anybody,” The Woodlands coach Jim Rapp said. “The kids didn’t have a good time, (the coaches) didn’t have a good time. It’s not normal for us, and we made a lot of uncharacteristic mistakes. We had a lot of young players and a lot of situations they hadn’t been in, so the kids learned a lot. We got a chance to watch the video and make the corrections that were necessary.”

The Woodlands took advantage of a costly miscue by Lamar early in the game. The Texans opted to punt after going three-and-out on their opening possession, but the kick ricocheted off the upback and left the Highlanders with prime field position. The Woodlands running back Jobarre Reed capitalized shortly thereafter with a 4-yard touchdown run.

Quarterback Connor Dechiro scored on a 1-yard sneak later in the first quarter, and Reed added his second touchdown from 7 yards out early in the second. Lane O'Brien then reached paydirt on a 9-yard run to give his team the 27-0 lead. O'Brien led the rushing attack with 56 yards on 11 carries. Jack Calhoun added 43 yards, and Reed had 39.

The Woodlands' defense was dominant during its first-half shutout, allowing just 82 total yards to the Texans. The visitors found tough sledding in the opening period in particular, gaining just 7 yards and failing to pick up a first down.

"I think the kids played with great intensity on both sides of the ball," Rapp said. "There were some challenges that were thrown down on some specific position groups to play like who we are, remember who we are. So they really took on that challenge, and I thought we played better defensively, and I thought we played better offensively, too, finishing drives and things like that."

The scoring continued in the third quarter as The Woodlands quarterback Justin Sheldon connected with Ben Ferguson for a 14-yard touchdown connection. Ferguson, who had 10 catches last week, posted team-highs with six receptions and 66 yards.

The defense got into the scoring action later in the period with Lamar threatening deep inside Highlanders territory. Linebacker Pablo Amaya intercepted a pass and took it back 97 yards up the left sideline for the 40-0 lead.

"Honestly, I had it set up before that play that I wasn't going to let them score," Amaya said. "I was going to make sure everyone on that field did everything they could to not let them score. ... When I got that pick, I just saw everybody running with me, and I knew my team had my back. I was trying my hardest, and I knew I wasn't going to let them down."

Lamar finally ended the shutout with 11 minutes to play in the fourth quarter as quarterback Winston Smith connected with Jackson White for a 7-yard touchdown pass. The Texans reached the end zone again a couple minutes later following a turnover by the Highlanders' offensive reserves. Kenneth Kennedy ran up the middle for a 3-yard touchdown.

The Woodlands does not currently have a game on the schedule for next week, but Rapp said his team could add an opponent should one become available due to the coronavirus. The Highlanders'

next surefire game will be Friday, Oct. 16, at home against Fort Bend Hightower, the No. 4-ranked team in Class 5A.

Lamar, meanwhile, hosts Houston Math, Science and Tech next Thursday night for its District 18-6A opener.

“Lamar will go through their district and be undefeated,” Rapp said. “They’re a good football team, very talented. They’ve had less opportunities than we have as far as practice, and we’ve had a game. That was the biggest difference tonight. They’ll be that much better next week. Your learning curve goes way up once you play one.”