

The Woodlands falls to Pearland on the road

By Jason McDaniel
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Pearland — Practice was hard to come by, but Pearland still came to play on the first Friday night for Class 6A high school football.

In an early showdown between two of the area's top 15 6A teams, the No. 14 Oilers held No. 13 The Woodlands to a field goal on its first series, intercepted three passes in the second half, and cruised to a 21-3 victory at The Rig.

"This week, (practice time) was minimal, because of the storm that hit us, so the adversity was there, but our kids adapted, and really did a great job Wednesday of staying focused, and working to get better," Pearland coach Ricky Tullos said. "And they came out (Friday) and executed."

The Oilers (1-0) sealed the win with two big second-half plays. The first was a 43-yard completion from quarterback Jake Sock to receiver William Foster that set up running back Darius Hale's 13-yard touchdown run on the next play. The second was RB Dominic Serna's 98-yard touchdown run after an interception by defensive back Deveon Moses gave the Oilers possession at their 2.

"We were able to hit a play there, and what a great run," Tullos said. "I really thought up front up we took control, definitely toward the end of the first half and into the second half, and really started to establish some good drives by being physical up front."

Pearland's defense made sure the lead stuck with three second-half interceptions by Moses, DB Kelekolio Linton and linebacker Baylor Johnson. Pearland also forced a key fumble for a takeaway in the first half.

"Our defense flew around," Tullos said. "They did a great job and gave a lot of effort. And we made mistakes. That's part of the first game but offensively, defensively and on special teams, the effort was there. That's a really good team, with a really good offense, we just played, so I couldn't be more proud of our kids."

Serna led Pearland with 121 yards and a TD on seven carries. Hale added 87 yards and a score on 12 rushes, and Sock finished 4-of-9 for 86 yards with a touchdown pass, and the Oilers finished with 308 yards and 12 first downs.

Defenses dominated the first half.

The Woodlands (0-1) had 169 yards before the break, and the Oilers managed only 107 - but still took a 7-3 lead into the locker room on Sock's 6-yard pass to wide receiver William Foster early in the second quarter.

The score capped a 10-play, 80-yard drive that featured two big throws for Sock, before the touchdown strike, and a 22-yard run from Hale, who moved the ball into the red zone at the 11.

That was one of only three first-half possessions by the Oilers. They went three-and-out on their first series, and kicker Caleb Mendez was well short on a 55-yard field goal attempt as time expired in the second quarter.

The Woodlands found success in the air, with QB Connor Dechiro coming out slinging. He completed 17 of 20 passes for 126 yards in the first two quarters, but the offense couldn't take advantage. After Trey Harrison's 35-yard FG on the opening series, their only other first-half drives ended in a punt and a fumble.

The turnover was particularly painful. After holding the ball for more than 9 minutes, and advancing 73 yards on 16 plays, defensive back Dylan Dixson forced RB Lane O'Brien to fumble just before crossing the goal line, and the ball rolled into the end zone for a touchback.

The Woodlands finished with 323 yards and 18 first downs. Dechiro completed 29 of 40 passes for 214 yards, with WR Ben Ferguson (10 receptions, 88 yards) as his primary target.

"What a night," Tullos said. "It was awesome. It's been a long time, and the kids have put in so much work this summer, and leading up to this."