

# THE COURIER

OF MONTGOMERY  COUNTY

## The Woodlands pulls away to 19th straight win over Oak Ridge

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SHENANDOAH — With several marquee recruits on the field, The Woodlands met Oak Ridge for the 19th time as District 13-6A began Thursday night.

The big school night crowd at Woodforest Bank Stadium was treated to a competitive first half. But the Highlanders seized momentum right before halftime and moved on to a 45-17 victory to remain unbeaten all-time against the War Eagles.

The Woodlands (2-1, 1-0), now winners of two straight, put in a touchdown with 10 seconds to go before the break and ended the game with 24 unanswered points.

Oak Ridge (1-2, 0-1) had a 1-yard rushing score from Frankie Arthur with 1:13 left in the first half to make it 21-17 Highlanders.

The Woodlands sophomore Quanell X. Farrakhan, who had two touchdown receptions on the night, returned the ensuing kick 89 yards to the end zone before a penalty was called.

Highlanders junior quarterback Mabrey Mettauer, the No. 37-ranked Texas prospect in the class of 2024 by 247 Sports, hit Branson McShaffry on a 61-yard completion.

The drive then concluded on an 11-yard touchdown run by Mettauer, who finished the night 22-for-32 for 336 yards and three touchdown throws.

“We went down and scored and it was a big turnaround,’ The Woodlands coach Jim Rapp said. “That touchdown right before half was big. Rather it had a big effect on them or not, I don’t know. But I think our coaches did a good job at halftime making adjustments. We did a couple things differently on both sides of the ball. Did a much better job stopping the run in the second half. I was pleased with what we did.”

Oak Ridge coach Mark Schmid, who left The Woodlands after 30 total seasons and 14 as head coach in 2018, admitted that the last score before the break was a big one to give up.

“Big momentum when we score and it’s 21-17,” Schmid said. “A little over a minute left to go in the half. Feeling really good at that point on our kids’ effort and what we were able to do. Then they went down and scored in that minute. And that really sucked the wind out of us, so to speak.”

It was a track meet early, a punting competition in the middle and more points added late in the second quarter.

Mettauer hooked up with Farrakhan Jr. twice in the first half for touchdown passes of 55 and 3 yards, respectively. Farrakhan Jr. is one of the top sophomore receivers on the recruiting scene with plenty of Division I offers. The 2021 Montgomery County Newcomer of the Year totaled 68 yards receiving.

Jason Williams opened up scoring for the Highlanders with a 16-yard run on the first drive of the night. That capped a three-play drive that included a 65-yard completion from Mettauer to Patrick Rabel.

After going down 7-0, the War Eagles went seven plays with Larry DeBose capping the drive with a 12-yard touchdown.

Down 14-7, Jacob Webb 39-yard field goal at the 8:02 mark of the second quarter pulled the War Eagles to within four points.

After the Woodlands scored to go up 21-10, Oak Ridge, led by senior quarterback Steve Smedley, converted a fourth-and-5 at the 16-yard line as a fade to the end zone resulted in a pass interference.

Smedley forced his way down to the 2-yard line on a physical run where he was tackled by three Highlander defenders near the pylon. After a pair of timeouts, Arthur punched in the 1-yard score to bring the War Eagle to within four points.

“I think we were pretty good on both sides of the ball in the first half,” Rapp said. “We had some dumb mistakes and a couple penalties that hurt us. That wasn’t a good thing. But the second half, we did a much better job of being more disciplined and I was proud of those kids. They played 48 minutes of hard football.”

The Woodlands used a trick play on its lone scoring drive of the third quarter. Mettaufer tossed a lateral down the line to wide receiver Rabel, who threw up a left-handed bomb to Williams for a 35 yard score. That play came off an interception by senior Jacob Pondrant.

Arkez Gomez caught a 1-yard pass from Mettaufer in the fourth quarter and sophomore kicker Scott Starzyk booted a 45-yarder for the final three points of the night.

“It was a tail of two halves for us,” Schmid said. “When you play good teams like The Woodlands, you have to play two good halves. We’re going to move on and learn.”

The Highlanders were able to dig into the bench as Patrick Miller played the final two series at quarterback. “We had some other kids get some opportunities to play, which is really good for them,” Rapp said. “They’ve worked hard since January. It was good.”

Rabel had 120 yards receiving on eight catches. McShaffry ended up with 78 yards.

For Oak Ridge, DeBose ran for 111 yards and Arthur totaled 81. Smedley threw for 95 yards, divided by six different players.

“I felt like our kids were okay at halftime and talked about coming back and answering with a score of our own,” Schmid said. “We made a couple first downs of our own and ended up having to punt. That’s the way the second half kind of went for us. We could never be consistent and string together enough first downs to put it in the end zone.”

The Woodlands came in off a 38-13 win over Lamar last week and that came after a tough start at top-ranked and defending state champion North Shore in Week 1.

“To me, it was just a next step in the progression,” Rapp said. “I feel like after the first week, we got better in the second week. And then we got exponentially better in the third week. The expectation to continue to improve.”