

The Woodlands Highlanders Fall To The Bridgeland Bears In The Season Opener

By: Parker Montgomery | Published 08/29/2026

THE WOODLANDS – With the 1st week of games in the books, the high school football season is finally underway. The Woodlands Highlanders had a rough 1st game, falling just short of victory against the Bridgeland Bears, 31-30. The Highlanders led for most of the game, but critical errors in the 2nd half allowed the Bears to storm back and take the lead in the final seconds. The Woodlands played a good game, with some excellent moments throughout, but the team still has a lot of growth to come, and this game will be a good lesson for the rest of the season.

1st Half: The Highlanders Take Charge Early

After a brief lightning delay, The Woodlands started with the ball 1st, giving us an early look at new QB Kaden Copelin and his offense. The first drive started slowly, with the offense gaining yardage but ultimately punting. That punt wasn't the end of the drive, however, as Bridgeland muffed it at their own 11-yard line, allowing the Highlanders to scoop it up and put the offense back on the field. WR Carter Cass then quickly scored on a nice pass from Copelin, putting the Highlanders up 7-0.

The defense held strong on Bridgeland's opening drive, forcing a quick punt. The Highlanders then drove down the field, with TE Colton Weddel getting them to the 1-yard line on a tricky route that was probably a TD if the ref hadn't spotted it. RB Jason Haskins then punched it in for his 1st TD, putting the Highlanders up 14-0. Bridgeland responded on offense, with QB Taylon Villanueva getting them into Highlander territory before RB Kash Schwab punched in a 20-yard run, making the score 14-7.

The 2nd quarter began with K Franco Heinze hitting an impressive 44-yard field goal, making the score 17-7. Bridgeland then responded again, with Schwab taking over the drive and scoring from 25 yards out, bringing the score to 17-14. The Highlanders kept the pace, as WR Bryson Bourne caught a pass and took it all the way to the Bridgeland 30-yard line, setting up Copelin nicely. The junior QB then threw one of the best passes of the night, firing a laser to WR Kaiden Stewart in the end zone to give the Highlanders a 23-14 lead into the 2nd half (the extra point was blocked, which is why it's 23, not 24).

2nd Half: Coming Down To The Wire

The 2nd half started with Bridgeland not doing much on their opening drive, but they got the ball right back after Cass fumbled in Highlander territory. Schwab then found the end zone again, cramping up multiple times throughout the drive, but still scoring and putting Bridgeland behind 23-21. On the next Highlander drive, Copelin was sacked 3 times in a row, leading to a rough 3-and-out that made it look like the Bears had snatched the momentum. Bridgeland drove down the field again, reaching the Highlander 20-yard line on a long pass from Villanueva just before the 3rd quarter ended.

The defense came out strong at the start of the 4th, forcing the Bears to go for it on 4th down in an attempt to take the lead. The Highlanders held strong, forcing a turnover on downs thanks to the combined efforts of DB Matthew Johnson, LB Jacob Montgomery, and DB Pilot Clary, who stopped a lineman from gaining a couple of critical yards. After a key stop, the Highlanders got back into form, with Cass making up for his earlier fumble with an excellent catch-and-run on 3rd down to keep the drive alive, then taking an end-around handoff and taking it all the way to the Bridgeland 5-yard line. The Highlanders burned some clock at the goal line, finally scoring as Copelin scored the TD on 3rd and goal, making it 30-21 with about 4 minutes left in the game.

Even with little time left, Bridgeland was on a mission on their next drive, with Villanueva hitting some great throws downfield to quickly move the Bears into scoring position. Schwab then punched it in again for his 4th TD of the night, making the score 30-28. The drive took only a minute and left Bridgeland with all 3 of their timeouts. The Highlanders did their best to stop the bleeding, with Bourne getting a nice run to about midfield before the offense stalled and they were forced to punt from a rough spot.

Bridgeland then started their final drive with all 3 timeouts and a chance to win the game with a field goal, thanks to the earlier blocked extra point. The Bears moved it down the field quickly, with Villanueva hitting quick passes in the flat to chip away at the Highlander defense. They got all the way to around the Highlander 20-yard line, setting up and hitting the game-winning field goal, taking the lead 31-30 with only 3 seconds remaining. The Highlanders couldn't do anything on the kickoff, so Bridgeland held on to win the game, capturing the lead in the final seconds and delivering a heartbreaking loss for the Highlanders.

Final Thoughts

This is a tough way to start the season for the Highlanders, who looked like the dominant team throughout this one, only to have the lead snatched away in the final minutes. Still, there are plenty of positives to take from this one, and it's a good opportunity to learn moving forward. Copelin looked strong throwing the ball all night, hitting some awesome passes and moving the ball well. He just needs better blocking from his line, which could allow him to settle in and make some of the great throws he made earlier in the 1st half. The WR core looked great too, with Cass, Bourne, and Stewart all strong and making solid plays throughout the game. The defense is definitely going to need some work, as tackling was a big reason Schwab was able to run all over them, and they were not able to get to the QB effectively, leaving him plenty of time to strike. If tackling and other issues can be fixed before district play, this team could be dangerous and has the talent to win, but fixing mistakes will be key to their success, and there's certainly some stuff to fix.