



THE WOODLANDS ROLLS OVER CLEVELAND WHILE CELEBRATING 50th ANNIVERSARY

Everything was golden on Thursday night as The Woodlands cruised past Cleveland while celebrating 50 years of Highlander Football. All four head coaches in the Highlanders' fifty years (Don Newsome, Weldon Willig, Mark Schmid, Jim Rapp) were present and were recognized as honorary team captains for the pre-game coin toss. In addition, many former players and coaches were in attendance as each decade of The Woodlands football history was celebrated. This included members of the 2003 and 2016 state finalist teams and members of the first ever graduating class of The Woodlands. As far as the game went, the Highlanders racked up 45 first-half points en route to a 59-0 shutout victory.

For the second consecutive week, the Highlanders found the end zone on their first offensive play. This week it was Kaiden Stewart, who caught quarterback Kaden Copelin's quick pass on the right side and scampered 51 yards for the score. The Woodlands has now scored on its first or second play of the game in four straight weeks.

On their next drive, the Highlanders would only need 3 plays. Bryson Bourne went 18 yards on the first play after receiving a short shovel pass from Copelin. Then two plays later, Copelin would hit Bourn deep across the middle for a 45-yd touchdown. Bourn recorded 3 receptions for 75 yards and a TD on the night.

The Highlanders went with a different approach on their next possession. TWHS took nine plays to move the ball down the field, highlighted by a 31-yd completion to Carter Cass. Jason Haskins would cap the drive with a 2-yd TD run at the start of the 2nd quarter.

The Woodlands didn't have to go far on their next drive. A shanked Cleveland punt was caught by defensive lineman Aiden Ventura and returned to the Indian 22 yard line. One play later, Copelin rolled out to his left and found Cass in the back corner of the end zone for a 22-yd score.

Another costly special teams miscue by Cleveland again gave the Highlanders great field position. A low snap wasn't fielded cleanly by Cleveland's punter and Cole Maxwell was able to fall on the loose ball at the 14 yard line. This time, Copelin found tight end Colton Weddel in the middle of the end zone for the 14-yd TD. For the third time on the night, the Highlanders converted a 1-play touchdown drive. Weddel would finish with 3 receptions for 52 yards including the TD.

The Highlanders took a more methodical approach on their next possession, using 10 plays to march down the field. On a 3rd and 3, Copelin hit Cass on a short play action completion who then raced 30 yards down the right sideline for 6 more points. Cass led the team in receiving on the night with 88 yards on 4 receptions and 2 touchdowns. Copelin would end his night with 297 yards passing and 5 TDs.

The Indians would see one their most productive drives on their next possession, getting past midfield for the first time in the game and reaching the Highlander 29 yard line. On a 3rd and 5, the Cleveland QB rolled out to the right but lost the ball and Jason Side-Anene recovered the fumble for the Highlanders. This gave The Woodlands one more scoring opportunity before the end of the 1st half. Two long completions to Weddel and JP Loranger got the Highlanders in field goal range, and kicker Franco Heinze hit from 37 yards out to bring the halftime score to 45-0.

The Woodlands picked up where they left off in the 2nd half. Sophomore Carson Bolender would take over at quarterback for the remainder of the game. On the first possession of the 2nd half, the Highlanders would march 58 yards in 9 plays. Running back Max Darce would punch it in with a 9 yard run to increase the Highlanders' lead to 52-0.

After trading punts, the Highlanders set up for their next possession at the 50 yard line. On the second play of the drive, Sophomore running back Aldo Salinas broke free and sprinted 51 yards for his first varsity touchdown. Heinze would convert his 8th extra point on the night to bring the score to 59-0.

The defense was dominant all night, holding the Indians to only 117 total yards including just 22 yards passing. Nate Beagle and Nico Chavez led the Highlanders with 7 tackles each while Max Mitchell and Jacob Montgomery added 5 apiece. Magnus Herndon recorded his 8th sack of the 2026 season, bringing his career total to 24. Herndon is now tied with Michael Purcell for the career sack record. This was the 2nd shutout for the Highlander defense this season.

The win improved the Highlanders' 2026 district record to 4-0 as they remain alone atop the district standings. The Woodlands can clinch an incredible 32nd consecutive playoff appearance with a win next week at Conroe.