HIGHLANDER FOOTBALL

HIGHLANDERS CONTINUE HIGH-SCORING WAYS, ROLL PAST COUGARS IN ROUND 1 OF PLAYOFFS

For the 5th year in a row, the Highlanders have advanced past the first round of the playoffs. The Woodlands continued to light up the scoreboard, walking away with a 55-14 win over Aldine Nimitz. The Highlanders have scored at least 30 points in every game this season and have topped 50 points seven times. The win sets up a showdown with Klein next week in the 2nd round of the state playoffs.

As has been the case throughout the year, the Highlanders wasted no time putting points on the scoreboard. After receiving the opening kickoff, TWHS needed just 4 plays to reach the end zone. QB Kaden Copelin hit Carter Cass on a WR screen that went 27 yards to move the ball into the red zone. On the next play, Jason Haskins sprinted through the heart of the Cougar defense for a 14-yd TD run.

Aldine Nimitz looked to respond on their first offensive drive, but couldn't handle the kickoff and turned the ball over. Nico Chavez raced down the field and put himself in perfect position to fall on the loose ball, setting the Highlanders up at the 25-yd line. Copelin hit Colton Weddel for 13 yards to advance into the red zone, but the TWH offense stalled there. The Cougar defense stepped up to force back-to-back incomplete passes followed by a missed field goal attempt, ending the scoring threat.

The Nimitz offense finally got on the field but were forced to punt after just three plays. Haskins bounced a run out to the left side for 18 yards followed by a 10-yd completion to Cass. On a 1st-and-10 from the 24-yd line, Copelin found Cass crossing across the middle of the field for the 2nd Highlander score of the game.

Aldine Nimitz got their offense going on their next possession. The Cougars marched all the way to the Highlander 24-yd line in 11 plays, but ended up turning the ball over on downs. Two plays later, the Highlanders were back in the end zone. On 2nd down, it was Haskins again. Haskins found a hole on the right side of the offense and raced 70 yards for the TD, making the score 21-0 still in the first quarter.

The next exchange of possessions didn't result in any points. Nimitz went 3-and-out before punting back to the Highlanders. The Woodlands moved the ball past midfield, but 4 straight incompletions ended the drive on downs.

Nimitz was again forced to punt on their next drive. Cass returned the punt past midfield to set the Highlanders up with great field position. Haskins run for another 18 yards as The Woodlands advanced down the field. This time, it was sophomore running back Aldo Salinas who darted straight through the middle of the Cougar defense for a 13-yd touchdown.

On their following drive, the Cougars finally connected on a big play. QB Jepreston Johnson's pass to Edwin Brown was tipped up in the air and fell into the hands of receiver Tyree Greenhouse, who sprinted the rest of the way to a 67-yd touchdown.

The Woodlands would go 90 yards on their next drive, highlighted by a 51-yd scramble by Copelin on a 3rd and 12. The Copelin to Cass connection would strike again to cap the scoring drive. From 27 yards out, Cass best his defender to the right corner of the endzone for his 2nd TD reception of the game.

Aldine Nimitz held the ball for 10 plays on their next possession, moving the ball into Highlander territory. A QB sack by Magnus Herndon forced the Cougars into a 4th and long, where Max Mitchell reigned in a bobbled completion attempt for an interception to end the scoring threat.

Not content to just run out the clock, the Highlander offense went back to work. Copelin hit Kaiden Stewart on the right sideline, who broke a tackle and sprinted for 33 yards. Right before the half, Bryson Bourn caught a ball across the middle and weaved his way all the way to the end zone as time expired. However, a holding penalty negated the touchdown. With one untimed down remaining, kicker Franco Heinze was able to add to the Highlander lead with a 34-yd field goal. The Woodlands went into the locker room with a 38-7 halftime advantage.

The Cougar offense opened the 2nd half with a productive drive that moved past the 50-yd line, but were forced to punt. Again starting a drive 90 yards away, The Woodlands would only need 3 plays to add to their lead. On the first play of the drive, Copelin rolled left on a play action fake and found Stewart for an explosive 59-yd gain. Two plays later, Haskins would score his 3rd TD of the game from 8 yards out. Haskins ended the game with 186 yards on the ground, his second-best career game. It was the 6th most rushing yards in a playoff game in Highlander history.

Edwin Brown would get the Cougar's second TD on their next drive. Lining up at the quarterback position, Brown kept the ball on the zone read and rumbled 52 yards to the end zone and get the Nimitz fans on their feet. The score cut the Highlander lead to 45-14.

Stewart had his 3rd huge play of the night on the ensuing kickoff. After receiving the kickoff on the 6-yd line, Stewart worked his way up the right hash and then back outside for 73 yards. A few plays later, Copelin hit Weddel in the back of the end zone for another TWHS TD. Copelin finished the game with 277 yards passing and 3 TDs.

The next Cougar drive was again ended with a turnover. Cash Mock picked off QB Johnson and returned the ball 25 yards as the defensive pressure continued to cause problems for Nimitz. The Highlanders were able to cash in on the turnover as the fourth quarter began with a 32-yd line field goal from Heinze.

The Highlanders will face the Klein Bearkats in round 2. The Woodlands hold an 18-4 all-time advantage over the Bearkats, including two previous playoff matchups.