

La Marque Manhandles TC

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Texas City Sun

The Battle by the Bay turned into a big bay blowout Friday night as the La Marque Cougars rolled over the Texas City Stingarees, 40-10 in the district football opener for both teams.

It was the first time that the homestanding team had won the cross-town game since 1997.

Beyond being the district opener, the game held greater bragging rights for the two teams involved.

“This game is a tradition and a community event,” said Texas City coach Tim Finn. “This rivalry is one of the best in Texas if not the country. People really get behind this game. It is great to be a part of it.”

The night started full of promise for a Texas City squad playing on the road against the #2 ranked team in the state and ended with a long bus ride back home.

Earlier in the day at the annual Battle by the Bay luncheon, Finn expressed to his players just how big the game has become.

“This game will be remembered for the rest of your lives,” Finn said. “You will remember it whether you want to or not.”

Based on the final score, chances are it's a game Texas City players would just as soon forget.

La Marque fumbled the ball on their opening drive giving Texas City the ball in excellent field position. They capitalized five plays later when Michael Perren drilled a 34-yard field goal to give Texas City a 3-0 lead with 10:10 to go in the first quarter.

The lead would be short lived as La Marque engineered a 12 play, 75-yard drive. Larry Kerlegan connected with Trey Payne on a seven-yard pass into the endzone and Taylor Wilkins added the extra point to give the Cougars a 7-3 lead with 5:56 to go in the first quarter.

The La Marque defense got into the scoring action on Texas City's next possession. After driving to midfield, the Stingarees fumbled the ball on a play into Cougar territory. The fumble was picked up and run back 63-yards into the endzone by Clarence Ward. Wilkins' kick gave the Cougars a 14-3 lead with 3:32 to go in the first quarter.

Texas City was forced to punt on their next drive and the Cougars got the ball back with under a minute left in the first quarter. After the offense gained just five yards on their first three downs, Kerlegan took matters into his own hands and broke free on an 85-yard scoring run. The point

after attempt failed on a low snap and the La Marque's lead swelled to 20-3 with 11:07 left in the first half.

The defenses took over after Kerlegan's run and kept the two sides scoreless for the remainder of the first half.

The scoring resumed on the Cougars' first drive of the second half when the combination of Kerlegan to Payne connected on a 15-yard scoring strike. Wilkins added the extra point and La Marque led Texas City 27-3 with 3:36 left in the third.

The Cougars added another score to start the fourth quarter when Kerlegan's six-yard pass attempt to Payne was deflected and caught in the endzone by Rejaie Johnson. Wilkins added the kick and the La Marque lead was 33-3 with 10:03 left in the game.

Texas City got its lone touchdown of the night on the following drive when Vincent Pervis scampered into the endzone on a 43-yard run. Perren added the extra point to cut the Cougars' lead to 33-10 with 7:20 left in the game.

La Marque finished the scoring for both teams on the next drive when Marcus Radin reached the endzone on a four-yard run. Wilkins kick provided the final 40-10 margin with 5:02 left in the game.

"La Marque has dismantled every team that they've faced," Finn said. "I have a lot of respect for Coach (Bryan) Erwin and the team."

The respect was mutual.

"Hopefully we will meet again in the fourth round of the state playoffs," Erwin said.

Kerlegan completed 12 of 18 pass attempts for 132 yards. He also had 132 yards rushing on six carries.

Pervis led Texas City rushers with 152 yards on 23 carries. Steven Mount added 65 yards on 12 carries. Mount also completed three of eight pass attempts for 45 yards.

Erwin also predicted during the luncheon that the game would be a tough battle for both teams.

"This is the toughest kind of game to take part in," Erwin said. "Tears will be shed. Blood will be shed. It is a very humbling experience to be part of this game knowing how much it means to these communities."

La Marque(6-0) will travel to Friendswood next week. Texas City (4-2) will host Santa Fe. Both games are scheduled to start at 7:30 p.m.