

# Friday Night Football Frenzy



November 15, 2025

*A publication of the Belton Journal*

Round 1 Playoffs



*HP*

13 VS 56



51 VS 14



# Tigers end season with loss to Pioneers

By Clay Whittington

The Belton Journal

Since 2023, the Alvin Iowa Colony Pioneers have only lost to one team. The Belton Tigers were unable to become the second.

After winning the first 12 games in the school's second year of existence, the Pioneers suffered a 42-21 defeat against eventual Class 4A, Division I state finalist Tyler Chapel Hill in the third round.

During the next two seasons, including this year, only defending state champion and District 9-5A, Division II rival No. 2 Richmond Randle has been able to contain Iowa Colony. The Lions won all three encounters in the span.

Opening its fifth consecutive playoff appearance in hostile territory, Belton

attempted to upset the No. 4 Pioneers, but their trend continued.

Behind a quarterback-receiver connection that accounted for four touchdowns, Iowa Colony ended the Tigers' season with a 54-14 victory.

The loss concludes a 5-6 campaign for Belton, while the Pioneers advance to face either Pflugerville or San Antonio Sam Houston en route to a potential rematch with Randle in the Region III final. The Lions defeated Killeen Ellison 61-20 on Thursday to begin their trek toward repeating.

While the outcome ends the Tigers' season, playing at Alvin Memorial Stadium, Belton went toe-to-toe with the state-ranked Pioneers early on.

Iowa Colony (10-1) struck first as senior running back Aaron Tanner

punched in a two-yard touchdown with 3 minutes, 15 seconds remaining in the first quarter, but the lead would not last long.

Anthony Garcia, a sophomore defensive back, reversed the momentum with an interception, setting up a scoring drive for Belton punctuated by a 15-yard touchdown connection between juniors Will Shepard and Gavin Ross.

Coming into the contest, Ross had 82 receptions for 1,157 yards and 10 touchdowns.

The high-scoring Pioneers, who averaged 47.3 points during the regular season, did not need long to respond, taking a 14-7 advantage into the second quarter following senior receiver Jayden Warren's 16-yard touchdown reception from Carson White.

Then, Iowa Colony began pulling



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away thanks to the duo.

With 4:08 until halftime, White found Warren for another score on a 14-yard completion, but the extra point flew awry. Nevertheless, the Pioneers continued to inflate the cushion before intermission.

An injury sidelined Shepard, but backup quarterback Sawyer Harbin, a sophomore, engineered a drive to Iowa Colony's 32-yard line. An incomplete pass on 4th-and-8 halted the Tigers, though, and on the ensuing snap, the Pioneers took advantage as White and Warren connected for a 65-yard touchdown.

The two-point conversion attempt failed, and Belton trailed 26-7 at halftime.

After halftime, Iowa Colony extended its offensive explosion to 47 unanswered points as White found Warren once again for a score on a 24-yard pass before a trio of interceptions led to touchdowns.

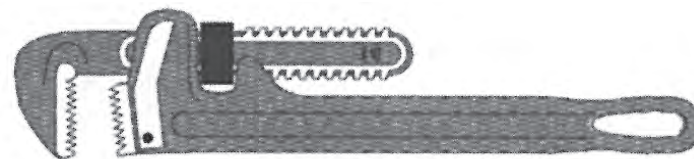
Leading 47-7 after the third quarter, linebacker Jeremy Garner recorded his second interception for a touchdown, providing the Pioneers' final points. The senior had one pick entering the contest but returned the Tigers' passes for 57 and 78 yards.

Belton's other interception set up a four-yard touchdown run from Pioneers junior Denim Barnes midway through the third period.

Tigers senior running back Matthew Sawe provided the game's final points on a 17-yard run into the end zone with 39 seconds remaining in regulation.

Although the outcome is disappointing, plenty of promise remains for Belton, which is poised to return a

wealth of talent, including Shepard, Ross, Harbin, and Garcia along with juniors Evan Echipare, a receiver, running back Javid Planz, receiver Cason Morton, cornerback Graham Chambley, safety Azian Wilkinson and sophomore linebacker Oakley Goings among others.



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# Lake Belton starts strong, comes up short against Highland Park

By Aries Ramos  
*The Belton Journal*

Lake Belton opened its playoff matchup against Highland Park with confidence, moving from its own 30-yard line behind early runs from Zyien Dupree and quarterback Jessiah James.

After appearing headed for a quick three and out, the Broncos kept the drive alive with a fake punt from Davion Peters to Gavin Owens. James capped the possession by finding Zion Harness on third and seven for the game's first touchdown, giving Lake Belton a 6 to 0 lead after a missed extra point.

The Broncos recovered the

ensuing onside kick, but Highland Park's defense held firm and forced a punt after a series of penalties and short gains.

Highland Park responded with a steady drive built on quarterback keepers and short passes, finishing with a rushing touchdown on fourth and two to take a 7 to 6 lead.

Lake Belton benefited from a pair of defensive penalties on its next possession, and as the first quarter came to a close, James connected with Peters for a 54-yard touchdown. The Broncos moved back in front 13 to 7.

Highland Park answered immediately on the next play from scrimmage with a 70-yard

touchdown pass to regain the lead 14 to 13, and the momentum began to shift.

Lake Belton reached midfield on its next series, highlighted by a 23-yard completion to Luke Philippos, but the drive stalled. Highland Park put together another methodical possession featuring screens, quarterback runs and short passes before scoring again on a rushing play to extend its lead to 21 to 13.

After a Lake Belton three and out, Highland Park struck again. This time the Scots converted a long touchdown on third and 17, pushing the margin to 28 to 13. A sack-filled Broncos drive followed, and Highland

Park capitalized with another touchdown to take a 35 to 13 lead into halftime.

Highland Park opened the second half with another short field touchdown drive, increasing the margin to 42 to 13.

Lake Belton struggled to regain offensive rhythm as pressure on James resulted in multiple sacks and stalled possessions. Highland Park continued to move efficiently, adding a 5-yard rushing touchdown and later an 18 yard score to make it 56 to 13.

In the fourth quarter, Highland Park focused on running the ball and managing the clock. A late drive reached the red zone before ending on downs. Lake

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Belton took over and ran out the remaining time.

The loss closed a challenging second half for the Broncos as Highland Park controlled the game's final three quarters.

The loss brings Lake Belton's season to a close at 5-6 overall. The

Broncos secured a playoff berth with a 4-3 district record, finishing fourth in a competitive district. With a large group of offensive contributors set to return, Lake Belton enters the offseason with a strong foundation to build toward a deeper playoff run next year.

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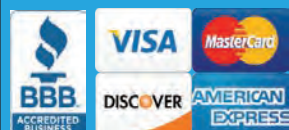
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