

Del Norte senior surpasses 2,000 career yards in opener

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Del Norte senior RJ Loftin enjoyed a milestone achievement in the Warriors' season opener in football this past weekend, as they kicked off the new campaign in impressive fashion.

The reigning Big 4 Offensive MVP scored four touchdowns to lead Del Norte to an emphatic 71-13 victory over Kelseyville under the lights at Mike Whalen Field.

Loftin finished the night with 127 yards on 10 carries and surpassed the 2,000-yard career mark.

And, according to his head coach, his hard work is paying off.

"It starts with his offseason," Del Norte head coach Nick White said of Loftin, who broke into the varsity team late in his freshman year. "He works out in the weight room very hard. He's put a lot of time into it and this is a product of all his hard work."

Loftin and the Warriors will be hoping to continue their outstanding start to the season when they make the overnight trip to the East Bay this weekend for a game at Piedmont on Friday night.

The Highlanders are 0-1 after dropping their opener 27-20 against Seaside, and White and his staff are hoping to use the two-day trip as a team-bonding experience.

The Piedmont coaches will obviously be wary of the threat Loftin brings, but he's certainly not the only weapon the Warriors possess.

The team's dominating ground attack racked up 393 yards on 32 carries against Kelseyville behind another outstanding performance by the Warriors' offensive line.

"I think everybody on the O-line did an amazing job," the head coach said. "Everything starts up front."

Senior Giancarlo Desolenni also enjoyed a big season debut and scored two TDs, one on a 47-yard run and one on a 56-yard reception from quarterback Cooper Maxwell.

The senior QB, now in his third year as a starter, also impressed in the season opener and has grown in stature since breaking into the team three years ago.

He completed 7-of-11 passes for 130 yards, two touchdowns and zero interceptions, as the Warriors offense set the tone early with eight first-half TDs.

"Cooper is definitely coming into his own this year," White said. "He has a lot of confidence right now."

And that could give the Warriors' offense an added dimension this fall.

Maxwell also completed a 19-yard scoring pass to Brody Mattz, who scored his first career varsity TD.

Caden Harrison and Aden Mintonye each also found the end zone in the victory, with the latter scoring his first career varsity TD.

"I thought we executed really well," said White, whose team averaged 12.3 yards a carry. "Our game plan definitely came into effect tonight."

The Warriors were just as dominant defensively, holding the visitors to just three plays with positive yards in the first half.

Even special teams dominated the early-season showdown, with kicker Daniel Gonzalez nailing all nine of his PATs.

The one negative with the performance were the abundant penalties, something the coaches will be hoping to clean up at Piedmont.

The Del Norte JVs also won their season opener, holding on to beat Kelseyville 14-9 thanks to three late fumble recoveries deep in their own territory.

Friday's varsity game is set for 7 p.m.

