

Incredible comeback carries Warriors to second place at section wrestling tournament

February 10, 2022



The Del Norte Warriors mounted an incredible comeback at Saturday's North Coast Section Redwood Empire Division-II Dual Meet Championships, on their way to placing second.

After comfortably getting the better of Windsor, 58-16, in their opening matchup, the No. 3 seed Warriors then faced off against No. 2 Casa Grande in the semifinal round and pulled out a thrilling 42-40 win.

The Warriors trailed 40-18 with four matches remaining, and not only did they need to win all four of them, but they needed to win all of them by a pin.

Alex Osbourne, Eric Stansbury, Andre Aflegue and Isaac Lopez all then came through with pins to secure the thrilling victory, with Osbourne winning his match in the final two seconds.

"That was probably the most exciting dual meet I have ever been a part of," said head coach Clinton Schaad, who has been coaching for 20 years. "Everybody wrestled really well across the board."

A young Del Norte team that featured just three seniors on a roster of 15 would go on to lose 55-21 to Ukiah in the championship match, but it was another strong showing for the program against the biggest schools in the Redwood Empire.

It was also the third straight NCS dual meet championships where they placed second, all three times to Ukiah.

“The H-DNL does well competing with those bigger schools,” Schaad said. “We were very happy with how we wrestled. You always want more, but sometimes you’ve got to sit back and think about the accomplishment.” The Warriors will now turn their attention to this Saturday’s H-DNL Championships, which will be held at Del Norte High School.

The boys and girls tournaments will feature competitors from all nine H-DNL wrestling programs, and Schaad is expecting a competitive meet.

“We’re super excited,” Schaad said. “It’s been a heck of a year for all the teams to compete, and every team has kids that can win a league title.

“I think this year we’re a little more even across the board.”

Despite the relative youth of many of this year’s league teams, the Del Norte coach believes the quality of high school wrestling in the area is on the rise.

“I’ve been doing this for 20 years and I think the H-DNL has gotten better,” he said. “We’re getting more and more kids out of our youth programs, and our youth programs have come a long way and are feeding the high school programs.”

Weigh-ins for Saturday’s tournament will begin at 9 a.m., and the first matches will begin at 11 a.m., with the championship round expected to start around 4 p.m.

Four spectators will be allowed per wrestler and the tournament will be streamed live through the Del Norte High School website.

There was no official league team championship handed out last season, but Del Norte is the two-time defending boys team champion, having placed first in 2019 and 2020.

The Warriors will be favorites again this week.

“I think everybody would like to win it,” Schaad said. “For my guys and girls, I would like to see them go out there and wrestle to the best of their ability and go out there and give their all.”