

Warriors win thriller to stretch Big 4 run

November 7, 2023



The Del Norte Warriors secured at least a share of a fourth straight league championship in football in dramatic circumstances on Friday night (Oct. 27).

They had to dig deep, scoring a pair of unanswered touchdowns in the fourth quarter on the way to an 18-17 come-from-behind victory over St. Bernard's at Mike Whalen Field.

But with their backs to the wall and the championship on the line, the players responded with a gutsy finish.

And it was the seniors on senior night that led the way.

"We stayed with what we do, and we grounded it out," Del Norte head coach Darren LaFazio said. "Our seniors stepped up. They really wanted this win.

"We needed to win this game and they knew it, and they played as hard as they could."

The victory was the Warriors' 15th straight in conference play dating back to the 2018 season, and it was their seventh straight over the Crusaders.

The Warriors went undefeated in conference on the way to championships in 2019, 2021 and 2022.

There was no league held in the COVID-shortened season in the spring of 2021.

With Friday's win, Del Norte improved to 2-0 in the Big 4 with one game remaining and 6-2 overall.

Also on Friday night, Fortuna beat Eureka 38-14, leaving both the Huskies and Crusaders 1-1 in conference.

With one round of league games remaining, Del Norte can win the league pennant outright with a win at Fortuna on Friday night.

The showdown against St. Bernard's was arguably the game of the season here on the North Coast.

The Warriors were held scoreless and managed just one first down in the opening half, and they trailed 10-0 at the break.

Quarterback Kyle Dixon finally got Del Norte on the board with 3:17 remaining in the third quarter when he scored on a three-yard touchdown run.

St. Bernard's responded when running back Wyatt Simoni scored his second touchdown of the night on a 38-yard run with 46 seconds remaining in the quarter.

The fourth quarter, however, belonged to the home team, which put up 12 unanswered points to secure the narrow win.

Sophomore fullback William McCovey scored the Warriors' second TD of the night on a 51-yard run 90 seconds into the quarter and Caden Harrison added a three-yard TD run with 5:25 remaining.

"I was really proud of the way we came out in the second half," LaFazio said. "All in all, I think we played them tough."

The Warriors defense held on late to seal the win, holding the Crusaders on a pair of late possessions, including a blocked field goal attempt as time expired.

There could yet be a three-way tie for the league title if Fortuna beats Del Norte at Husky Field on Friday and St. Bernard's can beat Eureka at Crusader Field on Saturday.

The Del Norte JVs also won their matchup against St. Bernard's by a score of 41-14.

With the victory, the young Warriors improved to 2-0 in the Big 4 and 6-1 overall.

Fortuna is also 2-0 in the Big 4, setting up a true championship game for the JV league title at Fortuna on Friday night.