

Warriors beat Eureka big-time to make state playoff round

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Having accomplished its first mission of the 2019 season, the Del Norte High School football team must now get ready for its second assignment - the North Coast Section Division 5 playoffs.

The Warriors wrapped up an undisputed Big Four Conference championship Friday night, overwhelming Eureka in the second half and winning 48-19 at Mike Whalen Field.

With the win, Del Norte swept its three conference foes, and posted a 9-1 overall record. The only blemish came in Klamath Falls, where the Warriors were bested by Oregon state title contender Mazama, 21-14.

Against Eureka, the two rivals traded blows in the first half; Del Norte on the ground, Eureka through the air. The Warriors led 14-13 at halftime.

The second half was all Del Norte. Despite suiting up just 21 players, the Warriors wore down and wore out the Loggers.

Coach Nick White credited that success to the way his team has embraced the Del Norte conditioning program. "We have no choice," White said. "We have to run, we have to condition."

Kobe Mitchell, running behind Del Norte's patchwork but effective front line, scored four consecutive touchdowns for the Warriors. Then, when the team's leading rusher, Levi Cox-Cooley, hurt his thumb, Del Norte put Chase Blackburn at the tailback position.

You might say that worked.

In the second half, Blackburn had runs of 49, 25, 57, 34 and 45 yards. He finished the game with 10 carries for 255 yards, including a remarkable 218 in the final two quarters.

White called it a "lights-out performance" by the senior.

A week ago, Del Norte assumed it would be spending this week preparing for a specific opponent that it would play either this coming Friday or Saturday. But North Coast Section officials announced last week they were pushing back the playoffs one week, allowing teams the opportunity to complete their regular seasons that had been disrupted by fires and power outages in the Santa Rosa area.

And that's just fine with White and his Warriors, who came out of the regular season a bit beat up.

The eight-team playoff bracket will be announced at approximately noon Sunday on the N-C-S website. Del Norte is optimistic it will be the No 2 seed in Division 5, and thus have a home game in the opening round.

Should it win then, a home game in the semifinals would follow on the weekend of Nov. 22-23.

In the meantime, the Warriors are going to try to get healthy, work on fundamentals, enjoy the conference title, and get ready for that first-round battle, which will be played either Nov. 15 or 16.

"It's a brand-new season," White said.