

Clifton sets new all-time scoring record for the Warriors

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The Del Norte Warriors tipped off an abbreviated basketball season last week, with both the boys and girls teams in action.

And for one senior in particular, it was a memorable return.

Playing in the season opener against Ferndale on Monday, Jadence Clifton scored 22 points to lead her team to a 42-31 win, while also setting a new career scoring record for the program.

Clifton, the returning co-MVP of the Big 5, came into the season needing just 13 points to break the record previously held by her former teammate, Kaleya Sanchez.

The senior standout added 10 points in a 44-22 win over Hoopa on Wednesday, and now has 1,495 career points in her three-plus seasons playing for the team.

“Absolutely, it’s a huge deal,” said Justin Clifton, the player’s head coach and father. “She’s good friends with Kaleya, and I think (Kaleya) knew if someone was going to break the record it was going to be Jadence.”

The two friends played together for the Warriors for two years before Sanchez graduated in 2019, and together they led the program to a memorable Big 5 and Dick Niclai championship double that year.

“Those two were amazing together,” the head coach said. “It was fun to watch (on Monday). It was a great passing of the torch.”

“It was definitely an honor,” Jadence said. “I’ve always looked up to Kaleya.”

It was particularly gratifying for her after all the uncertainty surrounding the season because of the pandemic.

“I definitely had some doubts,” she admitted. “I didn’t know if we’d get to play, but I stuck with it and it was definitely worth it.”

She has started the new season on fire, and in addition to her record-setting exploits the senior standout has posted a pair of double-doubles.

Through the two games, she has a combined 32 points, 23 rebounds, 14 steals and 12 assists.

This season the Warriors feature a young lineup, but Jadence believes the team is coming together.

“Our team chemistry is definitely getting better,” she said. “Those two games will help us prepare to play in the Big 5.”

The season will be a quick one, with just seven games over three weeks.

A scheduled Friday night showdown against Arcata had to be canceled because of COVID protocols at Arcata High.

“I told (Jadence) you literally have to play every game like it’s your last, because you really don’t know,” Justin Clifton said.

Earlier this year, Jadence was listed as one of 700 finalists for the prestigious McDonald’s All American Games.

She will play collegiately at Oregon Tech after graduation.

The Del Norte boys team also tipped off the new season with a couple of wins this week, beating Ferndale 54-28 on Tuesday and following that with an 81-51 win over Hoopa on Wednesday.