

Warriors turn big start into big victory over Alhambra

November 19, 2019



It may have been the finest 12 minutes of football Del Norte High School has played all season.

The Warriors dominated the first stanza of Friday's North Coast Section opening-round postseason game with Alhambra High of Martinez on offense, on defense and on special teams.

The result was a 21-0 lead, which eventually turned into a 41-6 victory at Mike Whalen Field.

Second-seeded Del Norte will now play at 7 p.m. Saturday, at home, against Moreau Catholic High School of Hayward in the semifinals of the Division 5 playoffs.

The Warriors are 10-1 overall this season.

Alhambra's hopes of surprising Del Norte really came to an end on the first offensive possessions for both teams. The Bulldogs went backwards on their first three plays and had to punt. On Del Norte's second play from scrimmage, Chase Blackburn burst into the end zone from 47 yards out.

On Alhambra's second possession, the Bulldogs lost yardage again and had to punt. Moments later, it was Blackburn scoring once more, this time from 20 yards away.

The Warriors then executed a picture-perfect onside kick, recovered by junior Kaleb Price. It was Price, scant seconds later, hauling in a 37-yard touchdown pass from quarterback O.J. Calleja.

Del Norte ran 13 offensive plays in the first quarter, averaging more than 11 yards a play. Alhambra had the ball for 11 plays in the opening stanza - losing 19 yards.

“The kids did a good job of picking up their keys,” Del Norte coach Nick White said of this team’s defense.

Del Norte finished with 375 yards in total offense, 301 more than Alhambra, which ended the season with a 5-6 record. The Warriors lost the shutout on the final play of the game, after Del Norte’s second-unit offense fumbled the ball deep in its own territory.

That said, expect a much tougher battle Saturday against the 8-3 Mariners, who played for a N-C-S championship last season and lost to Fortuna in the title game.

Moreau Catholic is the No. 3 seed in the eight-team bracket. After losing two of its first three games, the Mariners have won seven of its past eight games, and waltzed to a 56-27 victory over Miramonte High Friday in their opening-round game. Just like Del Norte Friday, Moreau Catholic led 28-0 at halftime.

“This should be a really good game,” said White, in his first year as the team’s head coach after a number of years as an assistant. “Both these teams are really super good.”

Way back on Aug. 23, the Warriors and the Mariners met in the first game of the season, in Hayward. Del Norte captured a 20-19 victory, as the Warriors’ rushing attack ground out the victory. Both Kobe Mitchell and Levi Cox-Cooley ran for more than 100 yards.

White says both teams are better than they were then. Moreau Catholic will have two key players available who didn’t play in August. At the same time, Del Norte is much more comfortable in the offensive system put in place this season by White and offensive coordinator Chris White.

In the other half of the Division 5 bracket, No. 1 seed Encinal struggled before finally putting away eighth-seeded Fortuna 35-24, and will play host Friday to No. 4 De Anza, which knocked off San Marin 41-21.

Check out Friday’s Triplicate for a preview of Saturday’s game, and for the Warrior Notebook.