

Warriors make their case with dominating win

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The Del Norte Warriors had a point to prove to the North Coast Section in their playoff opener last weekend, and they did that and more.

After being denied a home game for the opening round despite enjoying a dominating regular season and winning a Big 4 championship, Del Norte was seeded fifth in the Division-4 bracket and forced to travel to Hayward to play No. 4 Tennyson High on Friday night.

Many Warriors fans and players felt that game should have been played in Crescent City and that they should have been seeded higher than the Lancers after being ranked higher them all season long.

Friday's performance and a thoroughly dominating 50-14 victory backed that belief.

It was also the program's first playoff game in the new Division-4 field after the Warriors were moved up from Division 5 this year because of their recent success there.

"I thought we stepped up to the challenge of playing in a higher division and the adversity of having to travel down when we should have had the four seed," head coach Nick White said.

"We came down on a mission, We were ready to go."

The Del Norte players took control of the game quickly and decisively and opened up a 29-0 lead before the end of the first quarter.

For the game, they rushed for an incredible 534 yards behind a dominating performance by the line, with Giancarlo Desolenni, RJ Loftin and Aden Mintonye all surpassing the 100-yard mark before the end of the third quarter.

Loftin scored four touchdowns in the win, including three in the opening quarter, while Desolenni added a 31-yard TD run and finished with a career-high 259 yards rushing on 13 carries.

The offensive line, as usual, paved the way, as the Del Norte coaches opted to go run-heavy against the Lancers in order to try and take advantage of their superior physicality.

“I thought we had an advantage up front,” White said. “Our line stepped up and played great. Those kids just blocked their butts off all night. The O-line did a tremendous job.”

Loftin had a team-high 23 carries for 128 yards, while Mintonye added 127 yards on 10 carries, including second-half touchdown runs of 17 and 10 yards.

The win sets up a tough semifinal showdown against No. 1 seed Marin Catholic, which is ranked No. 4 overall in the NCS — behind only Pittsburg, De La Salle and Clayton Valley Charter — and is 11-0 on the season.

The Wildcats defeated Newark Memorial 69-0 in their playoff opener.

The game will be played on Saturday at 1 p.m. in Kentfield, with the winner advancing to next week’s NCS championship game.