

Warriors improve to 3-0 with another lopsided win

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Del Norte High's varsity football team thought it would get a stiff challenge from a La Salle Prep team of suburban Portland Friday night.

For a quarter, it did.

And then, the second quarter started.

What had been a 7-7 ballgame after the first 12 minutes turned into a rout over the next 12, as the Warriors steamrolled the Falcons 42-7 in non-conference action at Mike Whalen Field.

Del Norte outscored La Salle 28-0 in the second stanza, as running back Chase Blackburn posted his best game of his Warrior career. The senior scored a pair of touchdowns, and finished with 117 yards on 10 carries.

He wasn't alone. Kobe Mitchell also had a pair of T.D.s -- both on one-yard runs -- and broke the 100-yard barrier as well, finishing with 112. The Warriors' leading rushing this season, Levi Cox-Cooley, tacked on another 82 yards on the ground.

First-year head coach Nick White was pleased with the balanced performance, but he pointed to Del Norte's big, experienced front line for winning the battle in the trenches.

La Salle is one of the few teams that match up size-wise with Del Norte. The Falcons also had twice the number of players suited up to play -- 40.

It mattered naught. Luke King, Anthony Slayton, Timmy Thompson, Sam Schauerman and Tanner Forker routinely drove La Salle's defense line five yards back, giving the running backs plenty of room to cut and then accelerate.

Del Norte's defensive front -- mostly those same names as the offensive line -- controlled La Salle's running game, limiting it to a measly two-yards-per carry. That allowed the Warriors to concentrate on pass coverage, although Del Norte was aided by a number of dropped throws by Falcon receivers.

Del Norte got on the board first, with quarterback O.J. Calleja hitting wide receiver Kaleb Price on a perfect 15-yard fade route. The Falcons, who wanted to throw the ball as much as Del Norte wanted to run, responded with a 30-yard scoring strike.

But on the first play of the second quarter, Blackburn scored from 15 yards out, then Mitchell added his pair of scores. Then it was Blackburn again, with less than a minute left in the half, who turned a third-and-forever play into a 41-yard counter for a score that turned out the lights.

Cox-Cooley closed out the scoring in the third quarter with a 14-yard scamper, giving Del Norte back-to-back easy victories following last week's 62-0 win against Yreka.

Calleja turned in another rock-solid performance running the offense. The senior signal-caller only needed to throw the ball seven times, completing four for 74 yards and his third TD pass of the season.

Coach White said he was concerned before the game because he knew so little about the Falcons, which reached the first round of the Oregon Class 5-A playoffs last season and returned several all-league selections.

"We didn't know what to expect," White said. He and his staff had seen scant film of the Falcons, who were playing their first game of the season. "We just tried to focus on doing what we do."

Del Norte has now gone three consecutive games without a turnover, while a Cox-Cooley interception was the sixth turnover forced by the Warrior defense this year. The only stain on the evening was the penalty situation, as the Warriors committed 14 penalties for 105 yards, the third game in a row Del Norte has been in triple-digits in penalty yardage.

The Warriors go back on the road next week, heading to Petaluma High for a 7 p.m. non-conference fight. Del Norte will then travel to Klamath Falls for its annual clash with Mazama High before returning to Mike Whalen Field Sept. 27 for a homecoming night non-conference collision with Fortuna.

