

Warriors clobber Trinity, now rest during bye week

October 9, 2019



With no game on Friday night, the Del Norte High School varsity football team is focusing on two things this week:

1. Getting healthy.
2. The St. Bernard's High Crusaders, who the Warriors play at home Oct. 18 to start the Big Four Conference section of the schedule.

As expected, Del Norte easily dispatched winless Trinity High last Friday, 52-0, in Weaverville. The Warriors are now 6-1 this season against non-conference foes.

The only blemish on the record is a 21-14 loss in Klamath Falls to Mazama High, which is unbeaten and ranked second statewide in its division.

In its six wins, Del Norte's average margin of victory has been almost 35 points. Now, things get serious. And tough.

Consider this: The perceived easiest game against Big Four foes will be Fortuna on Oct. 25. The Huskies are just the two-time defending North Coast Section champion. They also won a state title in 2017.

The other Big Four team, Eureka, is the two-time defending conference champion that has won three in a row against good teams.

In other words, there are no more winless Trinitys on the schedule.

For first-year coach Nick White, Del Norte's only focus over the next two weeks will be getting his players physically and mentally ready for the high-powered Crusaders, who are 5-1 and averaging a shade under 40 points a game.

Del Norte is optimistic that senior Kobe Mitchell will be 100% for St. Bernard's. He suffered an injury in the first half against Mazama, then missed the non-conference games against Fortuna and Trinity.

Despite the injury, Mitchell is still No. 2 on the team in rushing, and is a critical cog for Del Norte on defense.

In his absence, the Warriors turned to senior Chase Blackburn offensively, and Kai Baugh on defense. Both have performed admirably.

Blackburn moved seamlessly into the fullback position. His blocking over the past two games helped tailback Levi Cox-Cooley average 13.5 yards per carry, 190 yards a game.

Baugh was effective at defensive end in spot duty against Fortuna, as he continued to recover from a pre-season injury. Against Trinity, he was unblockable, much like Tanner Forkner was the week before against Fortuna.

Del Norte has been playing with fewer than two dozen players all season, but of late has been able to add depth by bringing up players from the junior varsity ranks.

For example, Trevor Freeman continues to grow into his role defensively. Against Trinity, the sophomore intercepted a pass at the goal line to preserve the shutout, then literally wrestled the ball away from a Wolves receiver for a second pick.

Offensively, Del Norte has been able to give Cox-Cooley some rest thanks to the emergence of freshman R. J. Loftin. He is picking up better than six yards per carry, with 103 yards in two games.

Last season, Del Norte was also 6-1 against non-conference opponents before finishing second in the conference, one game behind Eureka. The Warriors last won a conference crown in 2016.