

Del Norte Notebook ... Nov. 6

November 6, 2019



Wearing the crown - Del Norte concluded a perfect Big Four Conference campaign Friday night, defeating Eureka 48-19 at Mike Whalen Field. The win gave the Warriors sole possession of the conference championship with a 3-0 record, 9-1 overall.

Over when - Eureka had cut Del Norte's lead to 27-19 with 1:37 left in the third quarter. Less than a minute later, running back Chase Blackburn avoided a would-be Logger tackler with a beautiful spin move, then accelerated 57 yards to the end zone.

Blackburn on fire - Blackburn's third and fourth quarters were the stuff of legend. The senior scored twice (and had another spectacular run called back by a penalty), and gained 218 yards in the second half. On defense, he picked off his second pass of the year and blocked a Eureka PAT, his second of the game.

Not forgotten - Blackburn's effort almost overshadowed the effort of teammate Kobe Mitchell, who scored four touchdowns in the victory, and gained 160 yards on 19 carries.

Rushing roulette - Del Norte's bread-and-butter has been its ability to run the ball all season. After Friday's performance, Del Norte now has five players averaging at least 7.5 yards per carry: Mitchell, Blackburn, Geo Gonzalez, Levi Cox-Cooley and R.J. Loftin, the freshman brought up from the junior varsity at midseason who scored his first varsity touchdown against Eureka.

Calling Smith River - Against Eureka, Del Norte's rushing attack combined for an amazing, almost off-the-charts 487 yards.

Credit due - Del Norte's front line has been anchored all season by Luke King, Tanner Forkner and Anthony Slayton. But with injuries impacting the starting lineup, the Warriors turned to reserves Noah Yang and Trevor Freeman. Obviously, Del Norte barely missed a beat. Yang plowed the road on one of Mitchell's TDs, knocking a would-be Eureka tackler back and allowing Yang's senior classmate to step into the end zone virtually untouched.

Payback - Eureka dominated Del Norte the past two seasons, winning last year 44-6 and in 2017 54-21. The Warriors' last win over Eureka was in 2016, which was the last time Del Norte captured a conference title.

Ringin' a Bell - Kudos to Eureka quarterback Trevor Bell, who was outstanding in a losing cause. The senior, who had missed three games because of an ankle injury, completed 29 of 43 passes for 295 yards.

"A" grade for the D - Bell was good, especially in the first half. But Del Norte's defense put more and more pressure on him in the second half, including three sacks in the fourth quarter. Eureka running backs gained a lowly 19 yards on 17 carries.

Turnover victory - Once again, Del Norte won a battle of the turnovers. The Warriors did not turn the ball over, while recovering one Eureka fumble and picking off a pair of Bell passes, giving Del Norte 13 for the year.

Opposing records - Del Norte's opponents have posted a less-than-overwhelming 37-48 combined record this year. That includes Moreau Catholic (7-3), Yreka (2-7), La Salle Prep (4-4), Petaluma (2-8), Mazama (7-1), Trinity (1-8), Fortuna (4-6), St. Bernard's (7-3) and Eureka (3-7).

Playoff perennials - Del Norte has been a frequent guest of the North Coast Section playoffs. This year marks the 14th time in the past 17 seasons the Warriors have advanced to the postseason. Last season, Del Norte made it to the semifinals before falling to eventual section champion Fortuna.

Speaking of Huskies - With Fortuna's win over St. Bernard's on Saturday, 34-26, the Huskies have a good shot at being placed into the eight-team Division 5 playoff field. It's even possible the Huskies and Warriors could meet for the third time this season. Del Norte has won two hard-fought games, 29-13 and 20-7. St. Bernard's will draw a high seed in the Division 6 playoffs; Eureka will miss the postseason.

In JV action - Eureka used four touchdown passes, and an interception return for a score, to capture a 38-20 victory over Del Norte in junior varsity action. The Warriors finished with a 6-3 record, one of those losses being a forfeit to Fortuna, a team it beat earlier this season, 51-8. Expect several members of the JV squad to be suited up for Del Norte's playoff games.