

Del Norte players playing key roles for CR

September 20, 2023



College of the Redwoods football is benefiting from the influence of a number of Del Norte players, as the Corsairs look to compete for a conference championship this fall.

CR kicked off the new season with a 21-7 win over Merced College recently (on Saturday), with some former Warriors not only starting but playing key roles for the team.

Most notably, sophomore linebacker Tanner Forkner got the new season off to an impressive start, picking up just where he left off after an outstanding freshmen season in 2022.

Sophomore running back Levi Cox-Cooley, a former Big 4 MVP, also looked good in limited action and was a bright spot on a sloppy offensive team performance, while freshman defensive tackle Bryson Price immediately looked good in his college debut.

But the success of the Del Norte players at CR doesn't surprise head coach Jason White, whose brothers Nick and Chris both coached these players during their time at Del Norte.

"We've had a good experience with all the Del Norte kids the last couple of years," the coach said. "They know they need to lift weights — they've been taught to lift weights — and they know they need to be on time, and they know they need to work hard every day at practice and not take a down off. It's that kind of mentality that helps them succeed."

Forkner was named to the American-Pacific 7 All-Conference team as a freshman and looks set for even better success this fall.

“He’s just been so good the whole time,” White said. “He’s the kind of guy you wish you had 11 of on both sides of the ball.

“He does everything right. He’s awesome in the weight room, he does the offseason stuff right, he works hard in practice and he’s a smart player.”

Forkner led the Corsairs in tackles a year ago with 73, and also had three sacks and 6.5 tackles for a loss.

Price, meanwhile, is undersized for a defensive lineman at 5-foot-7, 205 pounds, but he plays bigger than that and has been a pleasant addition to this year’s defense.

“He hangs in there,” White said of the 2023 Del Norte graduate. “He’s not real big, but he’s the kind of guy who shoots the gap and plays hard, and he’s going to make plays with effort.”

Cox-Cooley also impressed in the season opener and had 39 yards rushing on nine carries for a 4.3 average.

“He’s just got great vision and he can cut on a dime,” White said of the sophomore, who rushed for 364 yards and two touchdowns in seven games as a freshman a year ago (4.0 average) before suffering a season-ending injury. “He sees the best out of all of our running backs and that’s why he was the MVP of the H-DN a few years ago. And he’s physically stronger than he looks.”

Cox-Cooley can also catch the ball and had 12 receptions for 106 yards and a TD as a freshman.

There are two other Del Norte players on this year’s CR roster, giving the Warriors five total, second only to Eureka’s six players, only one of whom starts.

Defensive lineman Andrew Hunte and kicker/punter Daniel Gonzalez also made the 2023 roster.

Hunte, however, will miss the season after suffering a broken foot during training camp, although he is expected back with the team next year.

“He’s planning on staying in school and playing next year,” White said.

Gonzalez is the team’s back-up kicker.

“He’s working on getting stronger and getting better,” the head coach said. “He’s really accurate on short yardage kicks.”

Another former Del Norte Warrior has joined the coaching ranks, for at least one year.

Tight end Kaleb Price enjoyed a sensational freshman year with the team in 2022 and was an all-conference selection and the team’s most dangerous offensive player on his way to a team-high eight touchdowns in 10 games.

Price, however, suffered a knee injury in the final game of the season and is sidelined for 2023, although he plans on being back with the team in 2024 and has joined the coaching staff for this fall.