

Warriors secure third straight Big 4 league title

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The Del Norte Warriors are headed back to the North Coast Section playoffs, but they were left disappointed they did not get a home game in the opening round.

After wrapping up a third consecutive Big 4 league championship and a dominating regular season with a 41-0 win over Fortuna on Friday night, Del Norte was expected to receive a top-four seed in the Division-4 bracket and a guaranteed home game as league champions.

However, the NCS seeding committee did not agree and seeded the Warriors No. 5 to set up a trip to play No. 4 Tennyson High School in Hayward on Friday night.

“I thought realistically we’d get the four seed,” head coach Nick White said. “It was disappointing not to get a home game.”

The Warriors will have to put their disappointment behind them quickly as they prepare for a dangerous Lancers team that finished 8-2 this season, including a 5-0 mark in the West Alameda County-Foothill League.

In particular, they will have to account for senior receiver Taashaun Lyons, who is a heavily-recruited Division-I prospect.

“He’s very fast,” White said of the talented wideout, who averages more than 100 yards receiving a game and has scored 15 touchdowns. “He might be the fastest kid we’ve ever seen, so he’s going to present a lot of challenges for us.”

The Warriors will present some challenges for the home team as well.

They continued to dominate on both sides of the ball against Fortuna on senior night, in what was the team’s first home game since the end of September.

“Our kids were very excited to play this game,” White said. “We had a good week of preparation, it was senior night, and it was our first home game in a while.”

Giancarlo Desolenni and RJ Loftin each scored a pair of touchdowns in the win, with Desolenni finding the end zone on runs of 31 and two yards, the latter of which was set up by an 85-yard run by Loftin.

Loftin added TD runs of one and 19 yards.

“Between our line and our running backs, I thought we played outstanding on offense,” White said. “The holes were really big, and defensively we played lights out.”

The Warriors added a defensive TD when Kai Russell recovered a Fortuna fumble and took it 45 yards to the end zone, while ever-improving sophomore Aden Mintonye continued his impressive season with a 55-yard TD run.

The win stretched Del Norte’s winning streak in league play to 13 straight, dating back to the fall of 2018, and during that time they have now won three consecutive pennants.

(There was no league held during the COVID-shortened season in the spring of 2021.)

“It’s huge to win league three years in a row, especially with the teams and coaches in the H-DN,” White said. “It says a lot about the program, the coaches, the kids and everybody who’s a part of the program, and how much work everybody puts in.”

As for Friday’s showdown, the Warriors will stick largely to the game plan that got them this far.

“You keep going with the formula you’re successful with,” the head coach said. “We’re going to run the ball and take our chances in the passing game when they come.”

Friday night’s game is set for 7 p.m.