

## Warriors confident as they begin league play

October 26, 2023



The Del Norte Warriors have not lost a league game on the football field since the 2018 season, a streak of 13 straight Big 4 games.

Whether the three-time defending league champions can continue that impressive run in the coming weeks remains to be seen, but this year's team is quietly confident that it can.

The Warriors recently completed their pre-league schedule with a 21-0 win at Eureka in a non-league showdown.

They carry a three-game winning streak into league play and are 4-2 overall, having put disappointing back-to-back losses against a pair of Oregon schools (Grants Pass and South Medford) in early September behind them.

"I thought we were pretty average at first," first-year head coach Darren LaFazio said. "But I think we're getting better. I think we'll be fine in league. The kids are playing their hearts out."

Just as important, the Warriors are getting healthy at the perfect time.

This year's team has suffered multiple injuries, most notably in the offensive backfield, including senior starting running back Caden Harrison who broke his collarbone in the second game of the season.

The coaches, however, have gradually welcomed back the walking wounded one by one and Harrison is expected to make his full return in the league opener at home to Eureka on Saturday night (Oct. 21).

Harrison was back at practice last week and impressed his coaches and teammates, who are looking forward to seeing him back out on the field.

“He gives us a bunch of speed,” LaFazio said. “He’s fast. We’re excited to have him back.”

With so many injuries early in the season — the team’s top three running backs were out at one stage — several younger back-ups got to see plenty of playing time and gained some valuable experience, including sophomore running back Tobias Meyer, who will remain on the varsity roster the rest of the season after earning his spot.

After opening league play against a winless Eureka team (0-7), the Warriors will host St. Bernard’s the following Friday, before closing out league play and the regular season a week later at Fortuna in a game that could decide the league championship and whether or not they could qualify for a home playoff game.

The Warriors are also somewhat unpredictable heading into league play.

This is a team that has run the ball extremely effectively for the past few years, but they had a goal of passing the ball more this season.

That didn’t really transpire for much of the early season as the offense stuck to a very impressive and grueling ground game, although the Warriors attacked the Loggers through the air more than they had been doing.

Whether they go more to the air attack when league kicks off or continue to try to wear down opponents behind a relentless running game remains to be seen, but that’s something that could keep their opponents guessing.

The last time the Warriors lost a league game was five years ago this week on Oct. 19, 2018, when they fell 44-6 to the high-flying Loggers, who would go on to win the league and qualify for the state playoffs.

Since then, they have beaten St. Bernard’s five straight times and have four straight league wins over both Fortuna and Eureka on the way to Big 4 championships in 2019, 2021 and 2022.

There was no league in the COVID-shortened season in the spring of 2021.