

Warrior Notebook (semifinal version) ...

November 21, 2019



Easy win - Del Norte High jumped on Alhambra in the first quarter, racing to a 21-0 lead and cruising to a 41-6 victory over the Bulldogs of Martinez in the first round of the North Coast Section Division 5 football playoffs. The second-seeded Warriors improved to 10-1 on the season. Alhambra finished at 5-6.

It was over - With Del Norte leading 14-0, the Warriors perfectly executed an onside kick, with junior Kaleb Price recovering the ball. Seconds later, Warrior quarterback O.J. Calljea found Price alone at the five. He made the catch and stepped into the end zone. It was his sixth TD catch of the season.

Big defense - The Warrior defense pushed back the Bulldog offense throughout the first half. In the first quarter, Alhambra's total offense was -17 yards. The Bulldogs finished the first half with zero yards gained. Del Norte's Kai Baugh had three sacks in the first half; Anthony Slayton had two more.

More defense - Only two teams have scored 20 or more points against the Warrior defense this season. Mazama scored 21 in a seven-point win, while St. Bernard's scored 20 in a seven-point loss. In 11 games, Del Norte has given up just 119 points, little more than a game.

The pick - Levi Cox-Cooley corralled his second interception of the season. As a team, the Warriors have 14 interceptions, led by Conner Long with three. Del Norte also recovered a pair of Alhambra fumbles.

Chase is on - It's hard to imagine better back-to-back games than the two Chase Blackburn has turned in. After rushing for 255 yards on 10 carries against Eureka, the senior was "limited" to 194 yards on 15 carries. Blackburn averaged just shy of 18 yards a carry in those two games, and has scored six touchdowns in the past six quarters. Kobe Mitchell has five TDs in the last two games.

The future - With the win, Del Norte advances to the N-C-S semifinals. It will meet No. 3 Moreau Catholic at 7 p.m. Saturday at the Warriors' home, Mike Whalen Field. These two teams started the season back on Aug. 23, when Del Norte edged the Mariners 20-19 on a hot night in Hayward. The Mariners are 8-3 this season.

Moreau revisited - In that August contest, the two teams were evenly matched, with Del Norte pounding the ball on the ground while the Mariners were happy to gain yards through the air. Kobe Mitchell scored with 6:53 left in the game to tie at 19. Kenji Adams-Lee booted through the extra point, which turned out to be the game winner. After the kickoff, Del Norte's defense forced a three-and-out and with about six minutes remaining, got the ball back deep in its own territory. Behind the running of Mitchell and Levi Cox-Cooley, the Warriors ran out the clock, literally.

More revisited - Moreau Catholic quarterback Bowen Dickstein was a more-than-solid 12-of-18 passing for 205 yards, three touchdowns and zero interceptions in the season opener. Del Norte was led by Mitchell, who rushed for 130 yards, and Cox-Cooley, who had 123 more.

MIA - Moreau Catholic was without its talented running back, Fresh Isen, who ran for more than 2,000 yards during his junior campaign. Del Norte was without stalwart defensive end Kai Baugh. Both players should be available Saturday night.

Career starts - Both coaches have started their coaching tenures with outstanding results. Del Norte's Nick White is in his first year, at 10-1. Moreau Catholic's Rob Catrell is 20-4 in his two years at the Hayward school, 34-4 overall as a head coach. Catrell played college ball at Fresno State and then briefly with the San Francisco 49ers, and in the Arena League.

Familiar semifinals - This will mark the second year in a row, and the third time since 2013, that Del Norte has reached the semifinals. The Warriors advanced that far in 1982 (just four teams qualified for the postseason), 1998, 2005, 2006 and 2007. Del Norte has not reached the championship game during the modern area of N-C-S competition (1975 forward).

Waiting - The winner of Saturday's Del Norte-Moreau Catholic game will play the winner of Friday's game between No. 1 seed Encinal and fourth-seeded De Anza.

Back in 2018 - Del Norte and Moreau Catholic were on opposite sides of the bracket last season. The Warriors lost in the semifinals to Fortuna, 30-6, in Crescent City. Moreau Catholic won a shootout against San Marin, 56-47. In the championship game, Fortuna beat down the Mariners, 61-35.

