

Defense dominates again as Warriors improve to 4-0

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PETALUMA -- Under a full moon and playing on Friday the 13th, Del Norte's defense turned in a scary good performance.

The Warriors are now 4-0 this season after another crushing victory, this time a 49-7 thrashing of Petaluma in varsity football action.

Del Norte gave up a grand total of 80 yards, with more than half coming on a meaningless late Petaluma touchdown run long after the Warriors had sealed the victory. Eleven of the Trojans' rush attempts resulted in negative yards.

Petaluma's passing game fared even worse; one completion out of six attempts, for minus-1 yard.

"Those guys up front, they are so good," said Del Norte Head Coach Nick White. "They really had a lot of hard hits."

With Sam Schauerman and Luke King inside, and Kobe Mitchell and Tommy Thompson outside, Del Norte's defensive front was able to get penetration into the Petaluma backfield. When the Trojans were able to block that four, it was linebackers Levi Cox-Cooley, Chase Blackburn, Tanner Forkner and Anthony Slayton blitzing through the gaps and causing even more havoc.

"The defense led us," said White, in his first year leading the program.

Del Norte's defense offense wasn't bad. No coach is going to complain about his team scoring 49 points and gaining more than 400 yards against an opponent from a higher division and with twice as many players on the varsity roster.

But White pointed to another explosion of penalties against Del Norte, as the Warriors topped the 100-yard mark for the fourth game in a row.

"We need to clean that up," White said, although he also thinks some officials are just not used to Del Norte's style of play. "Our kids play very hard, and we are very physical."

On the positive side, Del Norte has now gone four games in a row without committing a turnover, while forcing a turnover on Petaluma's first play from scrimmage, a fumble recovered by Thompson. A handful of plays later, Kobe Mitchell had the first of his three touchdown rushes.

Levi Cox-Cooley added two more scores, while Chase Blackburn posted his second thrilling 41-yard touchdown run in as many games. The other Warrior who found paydirt was Kaleb Price, who hauled in his third touchdown catch this season on a 22-yard pass from O.J. Calleja. The senior quarterback now has four scoring tosses, with zero interceptions.

For the third time in four games, Del Norte had a pair of rushers gain better than 100 yards, Mitchell hitting 112 and Cox-Cooley another 105. Blackburn added 74 more, and Geo Gonzalez gained 77 yards on just three carries, including a season-high 45 yarder.

After squeaking out a 20-19 win at Moreau Catholic to start the season, Del Norte has vanquished Yreka, La Salle Prep, and now Petaluma by a combined score of 153-14. But the Warriors' next opponent should prove to be a far tougher test.

The Warriors travel to Klamath Falls, Ore., Friday for a battle with Mazama High. Game time will be 7 p.m.

The Vikings are 2-0 this season, and are considered one of the best programs in Oregon's 4-A ranks. Mazama lost just two games last season ... although one of those was a 28-7 defeat at the hands of Del Norte at Mike Whalen Field.

"They are going to be tough, but we like being on the road," White said. "We like the challenge."

In junior varsity action, Del Norte is now 3-0 after a 47-7 win over the Trojans. R.J. Loftin scored three times, while Caleb Dodson had a pair of touchdowns.