Del Norte Triplicate

SPORTS

Former Warriors help lead CR to breakthrough bowl victory

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College of the Redwoods ended a long wait for a bowl game victory on the football field this season and two former Del Norte Warriors played key roles on the way to achieving that.

The Corsairs routed Hartnell 63-0 in the 2023 Grizzly Bowl, played at Cal Poly Humboldt's Redwood Bowl on Dec. 2, and secured their first postseason bowl win in three decades.

They quickly took control of the game and dominated Hartnell in all three facets of the game, scoring on offense, defense and special teams and opening up an insurmountable 42-0 lead by halftime.

Running back Levi Cox-Cooley was named the game's Offensive MVP to cap a record-tying season for the 2021 Del Norte graduate, while Forkner, who also graduated from Del Norte in 2021, was equally effective on the defensive side of the ball, where he dominated at linebacker.

The shutout was the third straight for the Corsairs, who finished the season with a record of 9-2, their second straight winning campaign after going two decades without one.

Both former Del Norte players were also named to the American-Pacific 7 All-Conference Team.

Forkner has been one of the CR defense's most reliable and consistent players since breaking into the team as a freshman and head coach Jason White says he will be missed.

"I mean, he's just been so good the whole time," White said. "He's the kind of guy you wish you had on both sides of the ball. He does everything right. He does the offseason stuff right, he works hard in practice, he's a

smart player and he loves to win.”

Forkner had nine tackles in the bowl victory, which was the Corsairs’ first since a 1993 victory over San Mateo, including 2.5 tackles for a loss.

For the season, the outstanding linebacker had 49 solo tackles, which was 10th best in the state.

Cox-Cooley, meanwhile, ran for 107 yards in the bowl victory, including a 31-yard touchdown run less than three minutes into the game to give the Corsairs an early lead.

For the season, he rushed for 805 yards on 103 carries and averaged an impressive 7.8 yards a carry, which was sixth best among all running backs in the state.

“He’s just got great vision and he can cut on a dime,” White said. “He’s physically stronger than he looks and he’s a good receiver out of the backfield. He does a lot for us.”

Cox-Cooley also left his mark on the CR record books.

He rushed for 281 yards and scored three TDs in a 42-24 win over Los Medanos in early October, which is the second highest single-game rushing total in school history.

That day he scored on a 97-yard run, which also tied a school record for the longest TD run in school history.

“That was an incredible game,” White said of Cox-Cooley’s performance, which saw him average 12.8 yards a carry.

That performance was a nice reward for the hard-working former Big 4 Offensive MVP, who played just seven games as a freshman at CR before suffering a season-ending injury.

It was also announced after the bowl victory that both former Del Norte Warriors were among the six College of the Redwoods players to receive All-Region honors.

The talented duo are both expected to continue their playing careers at four-year programs and should receive plenty of interest after their outstanding careers at the community college level.

According to White, both Forkner and Cox-Cooley are in the middle of the recruiting process and still weighing their options.