

Mistakes send Warriors to first lost of season against Mazama

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KLAMATH FALLS, Ore.-- It's called old-school football, and it delivered an old-fashioned lesson to the Del Norte Warriors Friday night.

Del Norte's undefeated record this football season came to an end in Klamath Falls, as Mazama turned back the clock to capture a 21-14 non-conference win over the Warriors, their first loss in five outings.

Running an offense that went out of style with leisure suits, Mazama ran 42 plays from scrimmage -- 41 running plays, and one pass. In a time when football is ruled by either spread or air raid offenses, the Vikings rely on the old-fashioned veer, a scheme popular in the 1970s.

Del Norte Coach Nick White said before the game that Mazama's offense doesn't do many things, but what it does it does very well. White was right. The Vikings are well coached, disciplined and efficient.

Del Norte had won its first four games by dominating the lines of scrimmage. Against the Vikings, the battle up front was probably a draw. But the Warriors made more mistakes, and that proved to be the difference.

Still, Del Norte scored the first touchdown, led late in the third quarter, and had chance to tie the game in the final seconds. But in the end, the Warriors lost for the first time this season, and the Vikings improved to 3-0, having defeated Del Norte for the third time in four seasons.

Del Norte will look back at this game and rue the missed opportunities it had. For the first time this season, Del Norte committed not just one, but two turnovers, and fumbled the ball several other times. It also gave up its first interception of the season.

The Warriors got on the board first, with Kobe Mitchell hitting paydirt from 10 yards out, after Del Norte recovered a Mazama fumble deep in its territory.

The Vikings tied the game with less than a minute to go in the half, and it was 7-7 at halftime.

Del Norte took the opening kickoff of the third quarter and drove the length of the field, with Geo Gonzalez scoring on a 22-yard scamper. Mazama quickly responded with a score of its own, but the Warriors' Chase Blackburn blocked the extra point, and Del Norte clung to a one-point cushion.

That didn't last long. Less than three minutes later, Mazama quarterback Trisitan Lee escaped from three would-be Del Norte tacklers, then sprinted 60 yards to give the Vikings the lead.

The fourth quarter was dominated by Del Norte -- Mazama ran just three plays from scrimmage -- but penalties and mistakes kept stopping the Warriors, until their final drive.

Taking over with about five minutes to go and down by seven, Del Norte marched down the field, getting a critical first down on a reception by Kaleb Price. So, with less than a minute to play, Del Norte had the ball first and goal from just inside the Mazama 10.

Two plays got Del Norte to the 5-yard line, but a mishandled pitch play pushed the Warriors back to the 9-yard line on third down, and a final pass from quarterback O.J. Calleja to Price was a bit too far, and the game was over.

Del Norte had the two turnovers, completed just three of nine passes for 20 yards, and committed eight penalties for 105 yards. It also had a 12-yard punt when the Warriors had an opportunity to push the Vikings deep.

The defeat on the field wasn't the only losses. Two of Del Norte's top players -- seniors Kobe Mitchell and Timmy Thompson -- both left the game with injuries. Their prognosis for next week is unknown.

On Friday, Del Norte will be back home, on homecoming night, taking on Fortuna in a non-conference battle with the Huskies. Varsity game time will be 7:30 p.m.

In junior varsity action, Del Norte dropped to Mazama 26-8. The Warriors are now 3-1 this season.