

Del Norte Notebook ...

September 4, 2019



Warriors improve to 2-0 -- Del Norte had zero problems dismissing an outmanned Yreka team Friday, claiming a 62-0 non-conference victory. The Warriors led 28-0 after one quarter, 55-0 at halftime.

It was over when -- Senior Chase Blackburn stripped the ball from Yreka quarterback Tres Setzer and raced into the end zone from 15 yards out, midway through the first quarter, giving Del Norte a 13-0 lead. The Warriors never were remotely threatened again.

Offensive defense -- Along with Blackburn's scoop-and-score, the Warriors' defense also produced points in the form of Connor Long's 25-yard interception return for a touchdown late in the second quarter.

Defense, part 2 -- Del Norte's defense completely contained any running game Yreka had, limiting the Miners to minus-16 yards on 13 carries. Yreka had a hint of success throwing the ball, hitting seven of 15 passes for 95 yards, but Setzer was intercepted three times. Del Norte's defense also recovered a pair of Miner fumbles.

Calleja on target -- Del Norte's senior quarterback O.J. Calleja had perhaps the best game of his Warrior career, completing eight of nine passes for 166 yards, including touchdown throws to Kaleb Price (15 yards) and Levi Cox-Cooley (36 yards). Calleja also rushed for a score from two yards out.

Speaking of Cox-Cooley -- The junior recorded his second consecutive 100-yard rushing effort of the season, gaining 106 yards on just six carries, highlighted by a 75-yard scamper right up the middle for a second-quarter score.

Calling off the dogs early -- Del Norte coach Nick White played his reserves as best he could in the second half, but with just 21 players suited up, it made for some challenges. Back-up quarterback Kaleb Price got extensive time running a limited version of the offense. Reserve running backs Kenji Adams-Lee and Mike Weiland combined to carry the ball eight times for 45 yards and a score (Weiland from five yards out).

Mismatched rivalry -- Del Norte and Yreka have played each other five times since 2014. Two of the first three contests were won by the Miners, but the Warriors have outscored Yreka the past two seasons 106-0.

Good tidings -- This year's 2-0 start bodes well for the Warriors. In recent years when Del Norte has started 2-0, it has gone on to strong seasons. In 2018, the Warriors finished 9-3 and reached the North Coast Section playoff semifinals. In 2016, Del Norte won the Big Five Conference championship. The same was true in 2014. In 2011, Del Norte reached the playoffs with a 7-3 record.

Next on the agenda -- An unknown opponent will come to Mike Whalen Field on Friday, as La Salle Prep from Milwaukie, Oregon visits the north coast. It will be the first game of the season for the Falcons, who play in Oregon's Class 5A ranks, the second-highest classification.

Getting better -- La Salle has improved each of the past four seasons under fifth-year coach Aaron Hazel. The Falcons were 6-4 last season, reaching the first round of the state playoffs. While searching for a new quarterback this year, La Salle has some quality players returning, including running back James Menor and linebacker Ryan Bjornvic. Upfront, all-conference defensive lineman Carson Redmond is back for his senior season, as well as starting offensive lineman Zachary Quiones, who checks in at 6-0, 290 pounds.

Special game time -- The Warriors and Falcons will kick off at 7 o'clock, not the usual starting time of 7:30 p.m. No junior varsity game is scheduled. The KPOD Warrior Pregame show will open at 6:30 p.m. on 97.9 FM.

Other Big Four results -- St. Bernard's improved to 2-0 with an easy, albeit sloppy, win at Hoopa Valley last Friday. Both Fortuna and Eureka fell to 0-2 in their campaigns. The Huskies led late, but gave up a touchdown in the closing seconds and lost to Miramonte 45-39. The two-time defending Big Four Conference champion Loggers were stopped by Windsor 17-14.

Looking forward -- In results involving future Del Norte opponents, Petaluma improved to 1-1 with a 53-34 victory over Santa Rosa, while Trinity Valley fell to 0-1 by losing to Central Valley 26-0. Moreau Catholic, which lost to Del Norte to start the season, bounced back with a nice 48-29 victory over San Marin.

Another JV win -- In an emotional victory, Del Norte's junior varsity squad handled Yreka 34-0 to improve to 2-0. R.J. Loftin rushed for a pair of scores, giving him five so far on the young season.

Playing for Poy -- Missing from the lineup was Del Norte's Poy Aguilar, who was diagnosed last week with a serious medical illness and rushed to Oakland's Children's Hospital for treatment. His uniform was brought out to be part of the captain's meeting before the game, and was front and center after the win.