

The Warrior Notebook (regional finals edition)

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December 5, 2019



Champions - For the first time in school history, Del Norte High's football team captured a North Coast Section title, upsetting No. 1-seed Encinal High 14-13 in the Division 5 final on a rainy, breezy night at Hayward High in the East Bay.

Over when - Chase Blackburn blasted off the edge, dove, and blocked an Encinal 25-yard field goal attempt with fewer than 20 seconds to play, saving the victory for the Warriors. Del Norte's record this year is 12-1.

Next up - Del Norte has qualified for the California Interscholastic Federation's state playoffs. The Warriors will travel Friday to Sunnyvale for the Nor-Cal regional final against Central Coast Section champ King's Academy at 7:30 p.m. At the same time, in Southern California, El Monte and Serra High of San Diego will meet. The two winners will play Dec. 14 for the Division 5-AA state championship.

Defense - Both Del Norte and Encinal came into the game with well-earned reputations for defensive prowess. Both teams lived up to their billings. Del Norte was limited to 4.5 yards per carry against the Jets. It had averaged 7.4 this season. Encinal had averaged 30 points a contest. Del Norte's defense limited the Jets to 13.

Kenji comes on - Kenji Adams-Lee has been almost automatic on PATs all season and he was two-for-two against Encinal. The second one turned out to be the game winner. The Jets not only had a potential game-winning field goal blocked, but because of penalties, were forced to try an extra point from 40 yards out. It missed, which proved to be the difference.

Big Four - Fifty percent of the teams in the Big Four Conference captured NCS crowns. Along with Del Norte's victory, St. Bernard's captured the Division 6 title by knocking off Kennedy High School of Richmond, 31-28. Ferndale's bid in Division 7 came up short; the Wildcats lost to Salesian Prep, 50-29.

North powers - Big Four Conference teams have now won four North Coast Section crowns in three years. Along with the Warriors and the Crusaders winning titles this year, Fortuna captured championships in 2018 and 2017.

Knights' info - The Sunnyvale school is a private Christian school established in 1991. More than 950 students are enrolled in grades six through 12. Tuition per year for high school students: \$20,400.

Knights' leader - King's Academy head coach Pete Lavorato has won seven Central Coast Section titles. Five of those were at Sacred Heart Prep, before he took the King's Academy job in 2017. After a 4-6 record his first year, the Knights have won back-to-back crowns, posting a 21-5 record in that stretch. His overall record is 142-53, a 73% winning percentage.