

Warriors can't get too comfortable

October 4, 2019



Del Norte High's varsity football team shifts gears this week, going from the emotional high of playing a respected rival at home on homecoming to hitting the road to face a winless foe it beat easily last season.

And shifting gears can be tricky. Do it wrong, and you can blow an engine.

Fresh off beating Fortuna on homecoming night, the Warriors will travel to Weaverville on Friday to face a Trinity Valley team that hasn't won a game since 2017. Game time will be 7:30 p.m.

Del Norte is now 5-1, ranked No. 3 in Division 5 of the North Coast Section. The Warriors handled two-time section champion Fortuna last week 29-13.

Trinity Valley, on the other hand, is 0-4, after going winless last season.

MaxPreps has the Wolves at No. 12 in the Northern Section Division 4 rankings ... with just 12 teams in that division.

Trinity Valley lost last week to Yreka 26-14. Earlier this year, Del Norte defeated Yreka 62-0.

To put it simply, Del Norte is an overwhelming favorite. That said, first-year Warrior coach Nick White has some reasons to be concerned.

First, his team has played sloppy football the past two weeks. Mistakes cost Del Norte a chance to be undefeated in its loss to Mazama; those same errors continued to haunt the Warriors against an inexperienced Fortuna squad, which is now 1-4.

Del Norte turned the ball over three times against the Huskies, leading directly to both of Fortuna's touchdowns. The Warriors also had lost the ball twice against Mazama.

And in both games, Del Norte committed penalties by the truckload. Against Fortuna, the Warriors were flagged 16 times for 150 yards, including seven procedure penalties. Those type of mistakes will turn even a youthful coach like White into wrinkled, gray-haired old man in a hurry.

White was blunt after the Fortuna game; the penalty problem is going to be fixed this week in practice, period. If a team keeps turning the ball over, even an underdog such as Trinity Valley has a chance.

In fact, the Wolves have been fairly solid moving the ball on offense. Junior quarterback Levi Hubbard is completing 50% of his passes. As a team, Trinity Valley is gaining an average of seven yards every time it rushes the ball. However, it has struggled pushing the ball into the end zone, averaging just eight points a game.

Del Norte ran over and around the Huskies last week, as its big front line opened major holes for junior Levi Cox-Cooley, who posted a career-high 250 yards rushing. Chase Blackburn shifted to the fullback position in place of the injured Kobe Mitchell to add 61 yards on nine carries, while also blocking well for the tailback.

After this Friday's game, Del Norte will have a bye week, giving it a chance to rest, recover and refine before the start of the three-game Big Four Conference season. That begins Oct. 18 at Mike Whalen Field against currently unbeaten St. Bernard's.

Shortly after Friday night's game, read John Pritchett's recap at www.triplicate.com.