Del Norte Triplicate

SPORTS

Warrior Varsity Football End Zone Report

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Riding a three-game winning streak, the Del Norte High varsity football team is preparing for the most important stretch of its 2024 season.

After a slow 1-2 start, the Warriors dismissed Skyline High of Oakland 48-0, hit the road to hammer McKinleyville 55-0, and then ground down Oakland Tech in the East Bay, 13-7, on Oct. 4. Del Norte had a bye last week.

“We’re moving in the right direction,” said Warrior Coach Darren LaFazio. “But we still have a lot of work to do.”

The Warriors will be at home Friday at 7:30 p.m., as rival Eureka comes to Mike Whalen Field for a non-conference homecoming battle.

Against Oakland Tech, Del Norte used its ground-and-pound rushing attack, along with its traditional stout defense to claim the victory.

The Warriors' first offensive series saw Del Norte march 91 yards on 13 plays, all on the ground, culminating in Aiden Rice's one-yard dive for a score. But in the second quarter, Oakland Tech responded with a 33-yard catch-and-touchdown, and at halftime, it was tied 7-7.

To start the second half, Del Norte once again grinded out another long drive, with Rice scoring again, this time from 16 yards out, on a spectacular run. The extra point failed, so the Warriors led by six.

That was enough. Del Norte's defense dominated the Bulldogs, especially in the second half. Led in part by Curtis Bartley and Colton Schaad, Del Norte contained Oakland Tech both on the ground and in the air.

With just over seven minutes to go in the game, Del Norte took over on its own eight-yard line. The Warriors then methodically moved down the field, eating up the clock and sealing the win.

Running backs Ben Borges and William McCovey finished with a combined 213 rushing yards. As a team, Del Norte averaged 5.4 yards per carry. Rice passed for 40 yards and ran for 31 more with the two scores.

Del Norte's defense limited Oakland Tech to just 108 total yards, as the Warriors defeated the Bulldogs for the second year in a row.

"We are playing together as a team," LaFazio said. "Good practices lead to good games."

Friday's game will be homecoming, against a team that dominated the Big Four Conference for years, but has fallen on hard times. Eureka comes in with a losing record, after posting a 0-10 mark in 2023.

"That record is misleading," LaFazio said. "Eureka has played some good teams. And they always play us tough. It's a big game for both teams."

Del Norte won both times the two teams played last season, shutting out the Loggers 21-0 and 6-0. Over the past 20 seasons, Eureka holds a 14-13 edge on the Warriors, but Del Norte has won seven of the past eight contests.

"We'll be ready for them," LaFazio said. "But we know they will be ready for us, too."

The Big Four Conference season will begin next week, as the Warriors play host to Fortuna on Saturday, Oct. 25. Del Norte will then travel to Eureka to take on the Loggers on Saturday, Nov. 2, with the regular season coming to a close with a road trip to St. Bernard's High for a 2PM game Oct. 9.