
The Warrior Notebook (championship edition)

November 28, 2019



A step away - Del Norte High School's football team bottled up what was expected to be a standout rushing attack last Saturday night, lifting the Warriors to a 28-7 win over Moreau Catholic in the North Coast Section Division 5 semifinals.

Next up - Del Norte will play at 7 p.m. Saturday against top-seeded Encinal Hall for the N-C-S Division 5 championship. The game will be played at Hayward High School. Encinal is the bracket's No. 1 seed, with a 10-1 record. Del Norte is the No. 2 seed, also at 10-1. It's thought to be the first time Del Norte has played for a section title.

Over when - Moreau Catholic had cut Del Norte's lead to 14-7, after a 42-yard touchdown scamper by the Mariners' Devon Arnold, early in the third quarter. The Warriors took over at their own 25, then methodically moved down the field behind a power running game. That drive culminated with O.J. Calleja cashing in from one. The Mariners' wind left their sails.

Not this time - Del Norte and Moreau Catholic met in the first game of the season on Aug. 23, with Del Norte capturing a hard-fought 20-19 victory. Another nail-biter was expected last Saturday, especially since the Mariners had played that first game without two standout running backs, Devin Arnold and Fresh Ison. But the Warriors controlled the Mariners' rushing and passing attacks. Moreau Catholic finished with just 41 yards on 19 carries, and 71 yards on 6-for-19 passing.

Imposing will - Del Norte passed the ball just three times, because Moreau Catholic was never able to stop the Warriors' rushing attack. Del Norte rushed the ball 50 times for 308 yards.

Line play, continued - The Del Norte trio of Luke King, Anthony Slayton and Tanner Forker have been warriors in the literally sense of the word, anchoring that offensive front five. Sophomore Trevor Freeman stepped in at mid-season and has played beyond his years. When Sam Schauerma went down with a season-ending injury, Noah Yang filled the void. The result: In three conference and two playoff games, Del Norte has rushed for 330 yards per game and 7.3 yards per carry.

Great Dane - Del Norte coach Nick White isn't sure if freshman Jacob Dane had ever been in a varsity game before Saturday's battle with Moreau Catholic. He was brought up after the junior varsity season, but wasn't expecting to see any action. That changed in a hurry when starting right tackle Trevor Freeman broke his ankle in the game's opening seconds. With few options, White and his staff sent the 185-pound Dane in the game. White says film study showed what the staff suspected ... Dane more than held his own in one of the biggest games in Warrior history.

Believe in Adams-Lee - Del Norte kicker Kenji Adams-Lee booted four more extra points last Saturday. He has converted 48 of 50 PATs this season (plus a 25-yard field goal). That's a 96% success rate. Since 2012, Del Norte's best PAT percentage has been 87%.

Breaking through - Del Norte had reached the N-C-S semifinals seven previous times since 1975, but had never reached the championship game until this season.

Not a barrier - Del Norte had had just three 1,000-yard rushers this decade, and two of those came last year (Sebastian Puente and Ethan Price). Two more players have joined the club this year, with Cox-Cooley at 1,300 and Chase Blackburn at 1,014. Kobe Mitchell needs just 87 yards to reach that mark as well.

Encinal next - Encinal presents an extremely balanced offensive attack. During the regular season, the Jets passed for 147 yards per game and rushed for 145, on their way to a 10-1 record. Good numbers ... although not great.

Stout defense - Where Encinal has won games has been on the defensive side of the ball, giving up fewer than 10 points a game with six shutouts, including four in a row at mid-season. The Jets' defense has picked off 14 passes.

Close calls - While Del Norte has been cruising throughout the second half of the season, winning seven in a row, Encinal has been in some tight battles, including a 24-21 win Friday over De Anza High in their semifinal game. The Jets led 21-0, but some mistakes allowed De Anza to tie things up. Encinal needed a field goal with time expiring to claim the victory.

HDN power - Three Humboldt-Del Norte League teams have advanced to N-C-S title games. Along with Del Norte in Division 5, St. Bernard's will play Kennedy High on Friday in Division 6. In Division 7, Ferndale takes on Salesian.

