

Del Norte Notebook ... Oct. 30

October 30, 2019



On the road -- Del Norte's defense played better than its offense Friday night, helping to produce a 20-7 victory over Fortuna on the Huskies' home field. With the win, Del Norte improved to 8-1 overall this season, 2-0 in Big Four Conference games, and clinched at least a share of the conference title.

It was over -- O.J. Calleja's two-yard quarterback sneak early in the fourth quarter gave Del Norte a 20-0 lead, and while Fortuna was able to score in the fourth quarter, the Warriors' defense kept the hometown Huskies from doing any more damage.

Welcome -- Levi Cox-Cooley posted his sixth 100-yard rushing effort and surpassed the 1,000-yard barrier this season, becoming just the fourth Warrior this decade to reach that goal, joining Colin Taylor (2011), Sebastian Puente (2018) and Ethan Price (2018).

Reserves set up -- Because of injuries, Del Norte was forced to shuffle its lineup, especially on the defensive side. Kai Baugh and Chase Blackburn both moved to new spots, while Connor Long and Kenji Adams-Lee stepped into starting roles. The result? Fortuna earned a meager 129 yards in total offense.

Defense -- Del Norte added two more interceptions to its collection this season: Kaleb Price grabbed one at the end of the first half, and Chase Blackburn picked off another to end a Fortuna second-half drive. Two other interceptions were called back by penalty. Del Norte now has 11 for the year.

Long of it -- Earlier in the year, coach Nick White called Connor Long the biggest surprise of the season. As the year has progressed, the senior has taken on even bigger roles on both sides of the ball. Playing defensive end for the first time, Long was a frequent guest in the Fortuna backfield, forcing Fortuna quarterback Daeden Taylor to scramble more often than not.

Old friends -- Del Norte and Fortuna have now played each other a remarkable 35 times since 2004, with the Huskies holding an 18-17 advantage. The Warriors have won three of the past four meetings.

Up next -- The Loggers of Eureka come to town Friday for the final regular-season game of season.

If Del Norte wins -- The Warriors would claim the Big Four Conference outright, its first championship since 2016. It would also be positioned to host first-round and semifinal matches in the North Coast Section Division 5 playoffs. A victory would also be a fitting tribute on Del Norte's senior night.

If Eureka wins -- The Loggers, despite its 0-2 record in conference games and 3-6 mark overall, would qualify for the postseason with a victory over the Warriors. It would also mean that Del Norte would also share the conference championship with the winner of Saturday's Fortuna-St. Bernard's showdown.

History -- Eureka has defeated Del Norte the past two seasons, including last year's 44-6 spanking in Eureka. Del Norte clinched the then-Big Five crown in 2016 with a 24-14 victory over the Loggers.

Brother Bowl -- Del Norte coach Nick White will look across the field and see a familiar face. Eureka is coached by Jason White, Nick White's big brother. Adding to the family atmosphere is Chris White, who serves as the Warriors' offensive coordinator.

Rankings -- Del Norte stayed No. 2 in the NCS Division 5 rankings, behind Encinal of Alameda. Moreau Catholic, who the Warriors beat in the first game of the season, is fourth, while Eureka, despite its record, is fifth. Fortuna is eighth. MaxPreps has Del Norte ranked as the No. 25 team among all 107 North Coast Section squads.