

‘Real’ season begins for Warriors this Friday

October 15, 2019



The regular season for the Del Norte High School varsity football team is 70% complete. But a strong case can be made that the season really begins Friday night at Mike Whalen Field.

The Warriors face the St. Bernard's Crusaders in the opening weekend of the Big Four Conference season.

Both teams are 6-1 against non-conference foes. Both teams are highly ranked in their divisions. Both teams know whoever wins will be in prime position for a conference championship.

Del Norte is coming off its bye week, giving it a chance to get healthy and to prepare for a Crusader passing attack the likes of which the Warriors have not seen this season.

St. Bernard's senior quarterback, Will Omey, has completed 100 of 162 passes (62%), with 23 touchdowns against eight interceptions. He is throwing for 257 yards per game.

He is also the team's leading rusher, averaging close to 100 yards per contest on the ground.

His favorite target is senior Lane Thrap, who in seven games already has more than 1,000 yards receiving and 18 touchdowns.

What Del Norte football coach Nick White is hoping is that on Friday, St. Bernard's will face a defense the likes of which it hasn't seen this season. Del Norte is giving up less than 10 points a contest, led by a front

eight that has pressured quarterbacks from all angles.

In part because of that pressure, Del Norte has come up with eight interceptions in its seven games, including two in its most-recent game on Oct. 5, a 52-0 victory over Trinity High of Weaverville.

Offensively, Del Norte's focus has been running the ball with a platoon of backs. Leading the way is junior Levi Cox-Cooley, who has 10 touchdowns to go with his gaudy 9-yard-per-carry average. Chase Blackburn and Geo Gonzalez have been effective as well.

Back in the fold is expected to be senior Kobe Mitchell, who missed 2 1/2 games after being injured against Mazama, Del Norte's only loss. While he is a horse at fullback, his play on defense will be especially critical this week.

The seniors on both sides remember last year's game between the Warriors and St. Bernard, played in Eureka. Each team came in confident, and the Crusaders led 24-22 at halftime. But Del Norte's size wore down St. Bernard's in the final two quarters, with Del Norte bagging a 42-31 victory.

In that game, Omev completed 23 of 24 passes for 282 yards, with a pair of touchdown passes to Thrap. Del Norte countered with its own returning quarterback, O.J. Calleja, who scored three touchdowns rushing and another through the air.

Friday's game will be at 7:30 p.m. sharp, as St. Bernard's doesn't field a junior varsity team. Listen to the game live on KPOD 97.9, with the Warrior Pregame Show starting at 7:15 p.m.

And visit The Triplicate's website, www.triplicate.com, following the game for a timely recap of the action.