

Warriors' defense pushes Del Norte into semifinals

November 15, 2019



It was close to a perfect half of football for Del Norte High's defense Friday night.

Del Norte High destroyed Alhambra, especially in the first half, as the Warriors advanced into the North Coast Section Division 5 semifinals at Mike Whalen Field.

The final was 41-6, but the first-round game was over by halftime. Del Norte's defense limited the Bulldogs to no yards of total offense in the first half. Not just zero points. Zero yards.

Zero. Zilch. Nada.

On a cold, foggy night, Alhambra rushed the ball 23 times in the first two quarters. It lost yardage on 11 of those plays. Bulldog quarterback Tommy Turner was sacked six times before halftime (three by Kai Baugh, two by Anthony Slayton), and the only Turner pass Turner caught in the first half was by Del Norte's Levi Cox-Cooley. Along with Tanner Forkner, Del Norte's defense was dominate.

Meanwhile, the No. 2-seed Warriors were enjoying the late-season offensive explosion of running back Chase Blackburn, who scored four touchdowns on the ground and just missed his second 200-yard performance in a row.

In his last two games, the senior has rushed for 449 yards on just 25 carries, a ridiculous 18-yards-per-carry average. He's scored six times.

"We're going to ride him as far as we can," said Del Norte Coach Nick White, whose team improved to 10-1 overall this season.

Blackburn scored on a 47-yard touchdown sprint for the game's first score, followed that up with a 20-yard T.D. run, put one in the end zone from 26 yards away in the third quarter, and completed the night with an 8-yard score in the fourth quarter.

Add to that a perfect 37-yard touchdown pass from O.J. Calleja to Kaleb Price, and a Kobe Mitchell five-yard scoring blast. It was Mitchell's fifth touchdown in his past two contests as well.

There were some issues. Del Norte gave up three turnovers in the contest against the Bulldogs, and completed just 1 of 5 passes. Both teams had a player disqualified, and unsportsmanlike conduct penalties were common, especially in the third quarter.

It is the second year in a row Del Norte has reached the semifinals. In the Warriors' way of its first berth in a section championship game in recent memory is Moreau Catholic, the same time Del Norte defeated to start the season, 20-19, in the Bay Area.

The Mariners, the bracket's No. 3 seed, dispatched Miramonte Friday 56-27. The Del Norte-Moreau Catholic game will be played in Crescent City at Mike Whalen Field, starting at 7 p.m. on Saturday.

The division's top seed, Encinal, stopped a determined Fortuna team Friday, 35-24. Encinal will play De Anza Friday in the other semifinal battle.