

Del Norte Notebook ...

October 16, 2019



Getting serious -- The Big Four Conference season begins Friday with the two favorites meeting at Mike Whalen Field. Del Norte will host St. Bernard's of Eureka, with kickoff slated for 7:30 p.m.

Great starts -- Both clubs come into the game with 6-1 records. Del Norte's lone loss was 21-14 at Klamath Falls' Mazama, the No. 4-ranked team in Oregon's Class 4-A Division. St. Bernard's only defeat came at the hands of Templeton, 49-21. Templeton is the second-ranked team in the Central Section's Division 4.

Common opponent -- Both teams defeated La Salle Prep of Milwaukie, Oregon, this season. Del Norte knocked off the Falcons at home 42-7 on Sept. 6. The next week, the Crusaders made the long road trip and emerged with a 43-41 triumph.

Ratings -- With Del Norte having a bye this past week, it dropped a spot in the MaxPreps North Coast Section Division 5 rankings, moving to No. 3. St. Bernard's, which plays in Division 6 (smaller schools), is ranked No. 1.

More ratings -- Take it for what it's worth, but MaxPrep has Del Norte as the 30th-best team in all of the North Coast Section, which features 107 teams. St. Bernard's is ranked 31st, Eureka is at 32. Fortuna, the other member of the Big Four Conference, is 55th.

Not old rivals -- Del Norte and St. Bernard's do not have an especially deep history against each other, although they have played six times since 2010. The Crusaders won the first five, before Del Norte broke the skid last year in Eureka.

Standout QB -- St. Bernard's has a recent tradition of producing top-flight quarterbacks. Current Crusaders signal-caller Will Omev is averaging better than 250 yards per game throwing the ball, with 23 touchdowns in seven games. Before that, Jack Rice was a standout. He now plays at Sacramento State.

More than OK -- Del Norte's quarterback, O.J. Calleja, doesn't throw it around the lot like Omev does, but his numbers are darn good, too. Calleja is completing 64% of his passes, good for 677 yards, eight TDs and just two interceptions. For his varsity career, Calleja has thrown for 18 touchdowns and seven interceptions.

Geo on the go -- Geo Gonzalez has become more of an offensive weapon as the season has developed, both rushing and receiving. The senior is leading the team in yards-per-carry average (9.4), and in receiving yardage (237).

Kicking habits -- Most high school kickers make approximately 60% of their extra points. That's not the case at either Del Norte or St. Bernard's. The Crusaders' Guillermo Perez-Estrala is 11 for 13 on PATs, and one for one on field goals. Del Norte's Kenji Adams-Lee is 29 of 29, and perfect on his lone field goal attempt.

Intercepting -- Del Norte's defense has eight interceptions in seven games. Sounds impressive. And it is. Last year, the Warriors had seven in 12 games. In 2017, just three. But the 2014 Warriors, who claimed a conference championship, had 21 interceptions in 12 games.

Other action -- While the Crusaders and the Warriors square off Friday, it will be Fortuna at Eureka High's homecoming at 6:30 p.m. Saturday. The 2-5 Huskies fell last week to Foothill 35-20, while the Loggers were knocked off by Chico 35-0. Eureka, now 3-4 overall, was playing without its starting quarterback in that game.