

Experience key for the Warriors as they prepare for season opener

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The Del Norte Warriors will kick off the new high school football season on Friday night, with Enterprise High traveling to Crescent City for varsity and JV games.

This year's Del Norte varsity squad features plenty of experience, with seven of last season's 10 all-league selections back with the team.

That group includes senior first-team all-league selection Sam Schauerman, who is expected to anchor both lines for the Warriors and is described as "arguably the best lineman in the league" by head coach Nick White.

The third-year varsity player will be joined on the offensive line by fellow seniors Trevor Freeman and Konner Price, as well as junior Jacob Dane, all three of whom were all-league honorable mentions last season.

Another senior, Aidan Thomas, rounds out the starting offensive line, with senior Hunter Giddings getting the nod at tight end.

It's a unit that has been a traditional strength for the Warriors and one that is expected to be so again this fall, as they look to play a physical brand of football and establish the run first.

"We're going to do what we do and see what happens," White said. "Every kid is a little bit better at each position."

A trio of talented running backs are expected to see significant minutes, including returning senior Caleb Dodson, who was an all-league first-team selection last season, as well as juniors Giancarlo Desolenni and RJ Loftin, each of whom was an all-league honorable mention last season.

The experience of having so many players back from last year already looks like it's paying dividends.

"The kids have definitely taken a step up as leaders, with their execution and their confidence," White said. "Everything that goes along with having a year under your belt."

The Warriors will also try to establish a physicality on defense, with Schauerman and the rest of the line once again expected to set the tone.

"It's going to be a group effort," the head coach said of his defense. "We have a good mix of kids returning and it's going to start with the defensive line."

White and his players have been practicing for the past two-and-a-half weeks and scrimmaged against McKinleyville on Friday night.

"I was very happy with our effort and our aggressiveness," the head coach said afterwards. "As far as execution goes, some plays were good and some plays not so good."

Junior Cooper Maxwell will start at quarterback.

Enterprise, meanwhile, will make the trip to Crescent City for the season opener, and White is expecting a tough matchup for his players right out of the gate.

"They have a talented group of kids," he said after watching some game film earlier this week. "They're athletic and they have a lot of returners like us."

This year, the Warriors will play six league games instead of the usual three, with home and away matchups against their three conference opponents.

Interestingly, all four conference teams are now in the Division-5 bracket in the North Coast Section, and White expects all four to be in the mix for the playoffs.

"Like it is every year, you take it one game at a time in league. There's very good teams and very good coaching in our league," he said. "I expect three of the four teams — and I don't know which three — or all four to make the playoffs. I think it's that talented a league."

The Warriors were 2-2 during the COVID shortened spring season, with a 1-2 record in the Big 4.

