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The Ferndale Wildcats celebrate their NCS championship at Martinez Saturday night. Bryan DeMain/The Eureka Reporter

Tradition lives on

by Bryan DeMain, 12/3/2007

After Ferndale won the Class A North Coast Section title on Saturday, it all became crystal clear.

To conclude their 6-0 victory over St. Patrick/St. Vincent, the Wildcats took their final knee on offense on Alhambra High School's artificial turf field in Martinez, and Kim Jorgensen's reaction couldn't have been anymore telling.

For a brief moment, the usually mild-mannered, soft-spoken head coach was a bundle of enthusiasm, jumping higher than most of his players, as if he was one himself.

It's emotion rarely shown by the 17-year head coach.

The celebration revealed that the title was the lone aim all along and that anything short of it would have been disappointing.

After the procedural hand shakes with the opposing team, the Cats lined up to do what they have been doing for years following each game.

A few seniors organized the celebration, gathered the younger guys and they settled in to a line, raising their helmets in song to pay tribute to the former players.

And that is what separates Ferndale from the rest.

Football programs aren't made overnight – they are fully supported for some time before a tradition is paved.

It's not just a few coaches and parents at the field each weekend, it's the city, and if some are unable to make it (and it better be for good reason), they catch the game on the radio – and more importantly, the players know it.

The community of Ferndale not only embraces the team – it steers, trains and guides their young boys to have a fundamental understanding that putting on a Wildcats uniform is a part of a legacy.

The boys move from youth football to the prep level – from braces to patchy beards, from relying on schemes to relying on instincts.

Most of the names on the roster are sons, nephews and grandsons of former players and it's at that point expectations must be met.

That is Ferndale football and that is the largest contributing factor to why the Cats are consistently good.

Yes, the talent, the coaching and the discipline all play a part in the success, especially the coaching, but talent and discipline can be found at most schools just the same.

Let's face it, Ferndale's talent pool size is similar to the rest of the Little Four and the Cats continue to dominate the league and they play up to Class A in the playoffs, instead of Class B.

It's really the community support that is uniquely different from the majority of schools.

It was illustrated at the game. As usual, a sea of red in the bleachers could be seen from the sidelines.

(Opinions expressed in columns do not necessarily reflect those of The Eureka Reporter.)