

Ejection of Litvinenko Fires Up Cougars

By Steven Johns



Ryan Schori (15) Photos Tod Fierner

On Saturday Feb. 16 at 5 p.m., the Campolindo Cougars and the Las Lomas Knights took the pitch to determine who would play Miramonte in the boy's soccer semi-finals.

This North Coast Section quarter-final match was the third time this year these two teams faced each other. The first game, on Dec. 10, went to the Cougars as they won 3-1. The second game was a nail-biter that Las Lomas ended up winning 2-0. This tie-breaker match went to the number four seed, Campolindo.

The first half started quickly with both teams having early chances to take the lead. At 35:00 the Cougars appeared to take a 1-0 lead when Ben Rudolf had a throw in close to the Las Lomas net. The ball flew through the air and into the net, but was disallowed because no players touched the ball.

A few minutes later the Cougars had a free kick from about 40 yards from the Las Lomas net. Junior Alika Okamitsu kicked the ball towards the corner of the net, only to be blocked by the Las Lomas

goal-keeper.

On the ensuing possession the knights took the ball down the field into the Cougars' zone. Rodrigo De-Silva took a shot from the side. As the ball dribbled towards the net it was tipped by another player and slid past Campolindo keeper, Noel Raine, to give the Knights a 1-0 lead.

After a few chances for both teams, the score entering half-time remained at 1-0 in favor of the Knights.

The second half started out with the Cougars dominating the game. They kept the ball in the Knights' zone and were getting chance after chance to score a goal. Despite all of these chances the Cougars could not get the ball in the net.

The turning point in the game came on a controversial call with 26:00 left in the game. A questionable yellow card for Okamitsu led to Campolindo coach Victor Litvinenko arguing with the referee. This argument led to a red card and ejection for Litvinenko.

The ejection of Litvinenko lit

a fire under the Cougars. "All of the calls against us just gave us a burst of energy," stated senior Phil Choy. Three minutes after the red card, the Cougars had the ball in the Knights' zone. The ball was pushed in deep and given to freshman Jason Kimura. Kimura headed the ball to senior Georgio Tavecchio who headed it into the back of the net to tie the score at 1-1.

With 3:03 left in the game the Cougars had a corner kick. Rudolf kicked the ball towards the net and senior Thibault Deichler headed the ball past the Las Lomas keeper to give the Cougars a 2-1 lead.

With excellent defense and a few great saves from Raine, the Cougars were able to hold off the Knights' final attempts to tie the game.

The Cougars' game plan was the key against Las Lomas. "We closed down their main players, which got them too frustrated to play their best," Choy said. Campolindo hopes that their game plan continues to work in their semi-final match against rival Miramonte on Feb. 20.