

Mats Win NCS Championship

By Darrell Hirashima, Jr.



2008 Miramonte Varsity Team Championship picture: DJ Hirashima, Trish Hirashima, Darrell Hirashima, Kate Reid, Ashlee Burns, Katie Evans, Stacy Rosenzweig, Lauren Kimball, Kristine Miller, Chelsey Christenson, Katie Batlin, Stephanie Golden, Frances Moreau
Photo Kim Miller

Tied 6-6 midway through the first quarter of their third meeting this year with league rival Dublin on Feb. 27, the Miramonte girls basketball team found their shooting touch and never looked back, defeating the Gaels 67-46 and earning their fourth straight trip to the NCS championship game.

The Mats received solid play from junior forward Katie Reid, who came off the bench to post a double-double with 10 points and 12 rebounds. Ashlee Burns continued her post-season shooting streak, draining four 3-pointers and finishing with 14 points to go with four steals and five assists.

Miramonte headed into the title game against a young and talented team from Hercules High School.

In the final seconds of the North Coast Section Division III Championship game, onlookers viewed a familiar site, as Miramonte guard Katie Batlin touched her heart, stroked two game-sealing free throws and drove the proverbial dagger into the heart of Hercules High School and their aspirations for a North Coast title.

Miramonte got ahead early, up 13-10 at the end of the first period relying on the inside play of sophomore center Stephanie Golden who had seven points in the period. Three 3-pointers from Ashlee Burns in the second quarter pushed the lead to 30-20 by halftime. Hercules fought back valiantly behind 19 points from freshman guard Brittany Boyd, but trailing in the fourth quarter with time winding down the Titans were

forced to foul Miramonte to stop the clock. Like seasoned veterans, the Matadors made them pay every time by stepping to the line and collecting two points on each trip.

Championships are won and lost at the free-throw line. It was no exception Saturday night at Saint Mary's College, as Miramonte made 19 out of 23 free throw attempts including 10 for 10 in the fourth quarter on their way to a 61-53 win and their third NCS championship in four years. The Mats were led by Batlin's 20 points and flawless 14 of 14 free throw shooting, as well as Burns, who joined in the fun by hitting five 3-pointers in a row and delivering an emotional lift as she laid herself out at midcourt, diving out of bounds for a loose ball in the second half.

Miramonte forward Chelsey Christensen gave her own Herculean effort on the boards, limiting the opponent's second shot opportunities by fighting tooth and nail for rebounding position on every defensive play. Christensen also found a way to bring more than just scrapping in the paint, flying out to the perimeter to block a Hercules 3-point try in the waning moments and sinking a pair of clutch free throws in the final minute.