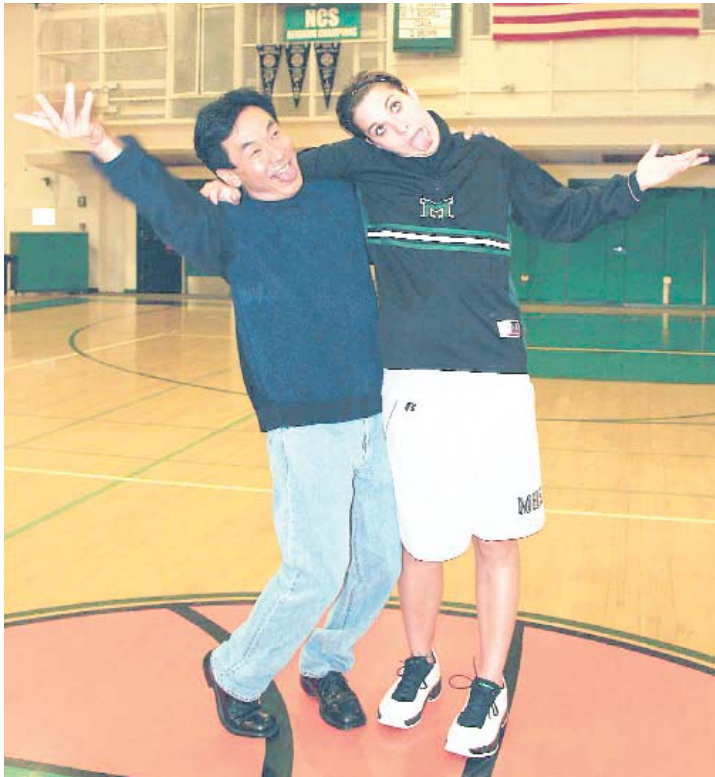


## Hirashima Reinstated as Miramonte Women's Coach

By Garrett Ley



Coach Hirashima and Katie Evans

Photo Jordan Fong

The man that many credit with putting Miramonte Women's Basketball on the map, under whose leadership the team won several DFAL titles in recent years and who led the Matadors to three of the past four NCS titles, was relieved of duties shortly after graduation, an event that stunned many in the Lamorinda high school community.

Two weeks later, the situation appears to have changed. On Wednesday, July 2, Darrell Hirashima announced that he has been reinstated as head basketball coach.

"I'm really thrilled that the decision to renew my contract has been made," Hirashima said in a phone interview Wednesday. "Right now, I'm just waiting for the legal people to sort out the terms and conditions so I can get back to coaching."

Hirashima was the driving force behind the Matadors' success

that has spanned over a decade. He took over the program during the 1997-1998 season, and has since led the team to a 238-85 (.737) record. Under his direction, Miramonte won 20-plus games nine times, made 10 runs into the post-season—including one trip to the 2002 State Championship—and captured four North Coast Section Division III championships.

"He puts countless hours into every player on the Miramonte team," said Katie Evans, a graduated senior who played for Hirashima for four years. "He has every game video taped, looking for anything that will help us improve our game."

"Even though I have graduated, I know that I can still call Darrell at almost any hour and he'll go to the gym with me and help me improve whatever skill I want."

Hirashima's commitment to the program has earned him a large

following of supporters. At a district meeting on June 18, over 100 people assembled at an Acalanes Unified School District meeting in support of the popular coach.

According to Evans, 10 speeches were made in favor of Hirashima, while only one speaker dissented from the majority.

"I'm really grateful to all the people who supported me, who wrote letters, and who came in and fought for me—it was really amazing," Hirashima said. "It was a team effort by the community."

Aside from the large turnout at the district meeting, a Facebook group with the purpose to save Hirashima's job was created. Within a week, nearly 200 people joined.

"Besides being an amazing coach, he is also an amazing person—and I think that is why it is so easy for fans to love him," Evans said.

The Matadors are fresh off a season in which they captured the league championship, grabbed the NCS title and finished 27-4. The Acalanes Union High School District has not disclosed the reason that Hirashima was dismissed after one of his most successful campaigns yet.

Hirashima has been through this before. In 1999, after just two seasons as coach, he was fired before getting his job back two weeks later. Similarly, in 2003, successful Miramonte men's basketball coach Tom Blackwood was relieved of duties after 38 years at the helm.

The Matadors have plenty to look forward to for the 2008-2009 season. They will return Stephanie Golden, Katie Reid, Chelsey Christensen, Lauren Kimble and their coach, Darrell Hirashima.