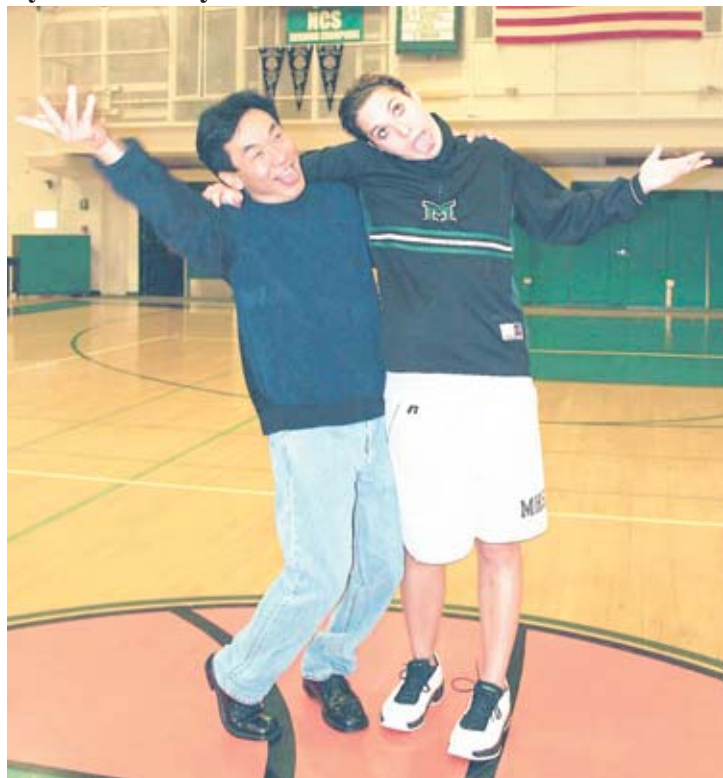


# SPORTS

## LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

### 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.

### Bay Cities League Heats Up

By Steven Johns



Willy Birkowitz of Orinda at MCC Driving Ranch



Thomas King of Moraga

Photos Andy Scheck

On Saturday June 28th the Moraga Country Club (MCC) junior golfers traveled to Santa Rosa to take on the Santa Rosa Country Club golfers.

Looking to find its first win of the season MCC took on the immense challenge of going head to head against the strong Santa Rosa CC, which is undefeated on the season and in second place in the Northern division. MCC did not beat Santa Rosa but managed to gain a few points.

With a mere 8 points this year the MCC golfers have struggled to find their way against stronger opponents. This however has not deterred the junior golfers from taking on the tough competition and has

given the golfers a great experience for their golfing futures.

The highlight of Saturday's match against Santa Rosa came on the back nine of the top match of the day. MCC's number one golfer, Thomas King, single handedly took on two of the toughest competitors he has had to face this year. King was able to make an 8 foot birdie putt on the 18th hole to halve the back nine. His 38 on the back nine tied Santa Rosa in stroke play and best ball to give MCC some much needed points.

"It was tough for me; I had to play within myself and focus on my own game rather than try to do what my competition was doing" commented King on his play. "The guys we were playing against were so

good, and it was tough to watch them consistently hit impossible shots close to the pin... but I knew that I had to focus on playing my own game."

Willy Birkowitz managed to take 1.5 points away from Santa Rosa even though he had to play by himself. With MCC a man, short Birkowitz successfully fended off two Santa Rosa golfers in his match.

Even if the MCC golfers are not winning, they are having fun and are gaining a lot of experience in the process. As King said, "Bay Cities is a fun league because it lets those of us who aren't necessarily top ranked junior golfers, go and play against some of the best players in the area."

### Kim Vandenberg Almost Makes It

By Steven Johns

As the current Olympic trials end, one name should stick out to Lamorinda fans: Kim Vandenberg. Vandenberg, a native of Moraga and former Campolindo Cougar, was trying to make the U.S Olympic swim team and compete in the 100 butterfly and the 200 butterfly.

Vandenberg's high school career was filled with awards and records. She was a six time North Coast Section champion with two championships in the 50 free and 100 free and one championship in the 200 free and 500 free. Vandenberg is the national high school record holder in the 100 free with a time of 49.41. In 2000 Van-

denberg was the number one ranked swimmer in the nation in the 200 fly with a time of 1:58.9. That same year she also qualified for seven events in the Olympic Trials.

At UCLA Vandenberg continued her successful swimming career. In 2002-2003 Vandenberg was named the Pac-10 newcomer of the year and placed fifth in the 200 fly in the NCAA Championships, the highest of any UCLA swimmer. In 2003-2004 Vandenberg was a NCAA All-American in the 200 fly and the 100 fly. She also set school records in those two events that year. In the summer of 2004 Vandenberg made it to the finals of

the Olympic Trials. Unfortunately her fifth place finish in the 200 fly did not net her a place on the 2004 Olympic team.

Vandenberg made it to the finals for both the 100 fly and the 200 fly but unfortunately fell just a bit short in both events. In the 100 fly Vandenberg finished in 7th place with a time of 58.84, .73 seconds behind the leader. In the 200 fly, Vandenberg's best event, she came in 3rd place with a time of 2:08.48, only 1.15 seconds behind second place.

Vandenberg has had a very successful career and could set her sights on the 2012 Olympics.

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