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Champions Among Champions

"...we think we have the top team in the nation." - Coach James Lathrop

By Robin Schoettler Fox



Photo Robert Johnson

Pictured: row 1: Lucas Duplancic, James Perry, Stephen Siri, John Nash, Juraj Juricivic row 2: Daniel Buzu, Liam Kelly, John Martello, John Holland row 3: Corey Abraham, Tommy Briskey, Danny Crocker, Ryan Higgins, Jake Nelson, Nick Deaver, coach James Lathrop row 4: Brian Baier, Tyler Barker, Jeremy Unger, Aleck Ryner, Zach Taapken, Silas Wilkinson, Joey Fabian, Justin Sawrey-Kubicek

A man in a De La Salle booster shirt approached what looked to be a Miramonte parent. The first man shook the second one's hand and said, "We may never see another team like that in Northern California."

The Mats had just beaten De La Salle, 17 to 6, securing the 2008 North Coast Section boys water polo title, closing Miramonte's season with a 26 - 1 record and an impressive list of accomplishments, including being the first team from Northern California ever to win the So-Cal Invitational.

Does all that equal Dream Team?

James Lathrop, the team's head coach and former Miramonte All-American player, weighs in:

Lamorinda Weekly: Who are this season's top players?

Lathrop: (We have) lots of them. One of the reasons we were so successful this season is that all our top players were willing to sacrifice personal glory for team success. Players were willing to give up a shot they could make in order to set up a teammate for a better shot. In our system, there is not one player that gets to shoot the ball more than any other, which made us hard to defend. Teams

could not just focus on defending one player because all six players in the pool have the ability to score. Sometimes we saw that teams were trying to keep one player from scoring the ball, but it just gave another player the opportunity to score. If you look at our stats throughout the season, our scoring was very balanced and almost every game we had five or six different players score goals.

LW: Is this season's team a Dream Team?

Lathrop: We definitely had a unique team this year, led by several very talented seniors. This group of seniors was unique in a few ways. First of all, they are extremely talented. Several of them have had the opportunity to play on national age group teams and All Star teams during the off-season. The entire starting lineup has been recruited to play at some of the top division I schools in the NCAA. The starters will play next year at schools such as UCLA, Cal, USC, Santa Clara, Brown and Pepperdine. Secondly, the core players have been playing together since they were 12 or 13 years old. This has allowed them to improve together throughout the years, hold each other accountable as a team, and challenge each other to get better. They truly care about each other and enjoy playing with each other. Lastly, they played like the top team in the nation. They played the top teams and were successful, if not dominant at times.

LW: Will we ever see another local team like this one?

Lathrop: Our record is the top record of any school in the state, and since the top teams from California are considered the top teams in the country, we think we have the top team in the nation this season. While I hope our area does get another chance to have the top team in the nation come from a local school, it is something that is very rare and something that I will treasure in my coaching career.



James Perry (9) Photo Robert Johnson

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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