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## High School Basketball Begins - Clipboard Changes

By Robin Schoettler Fox and Conrad Bassett

Let's not rehash the WHY. It's confusing enough just figure out WHO is courtside WHERE in Lamorinda this season, and WHAT putting familiar faces on new courts might mean for our local high school varsity basketball teams.

Clay Kallam, now in his second year as Campolindo's head coach, has suddenly become dean of Lamorinda girls' varsity basketball, an honor justified by an extensive resume that includes assisting Campo's Scott Brown to two state championships in the 1990's.

Astute boosters will recognize Acalanes' new coach, Corrie Mizusawa, as the former starting forward who scored the last nine points to clinch the Acalanes state championship win in 1999, before moving on to Saint Mary's College and then University of Oregon.

Now back coaching girls basketball, James Kizziee last year assisted Coach Chris Whirlow and his boys' NCS Division III championship team at Campo, having spent three of the four prior years working with the girls' program. The new head coach for the Lady Mats, Kizziee is also a Cougar varsity parent (see related story).

Meanwhile, on the boys' side, Miramonte's head coach Dave Brown, three seasons at the Mats helm, has local head coach seniority.

Matt Watson, whose been head coach at all player levels - frosh, JV, and varsity -- over the past twenty years (Acalanes, Campo, College Park), moves from Campo's assistant coach pool to head coach this year, bringing his own coaching style to a group of players he already knows.

At Acalanes, it's Darrell Hirashima, Jr., who's holding the clipboard. A former Contra Costa County Player of the Year (1998) at Miramonte, Hirashima had been working with Lady Mats since 1999, most recently as JV coach. Justin Blackwood is assisting Hirashima, clinching a wild card - kitchen table access to arguably the two most experienced former varsity coaches in Lamorinda, Tom Blackwood and Darrell, Sr.

Returning players. Key losses. Impact newcomers. These monikers are usually reserved for players.

"Basketball is really about fundamentals and individual skills as applied to the team dynamic," says Lady Mat's Coach Kizziee.

Predictions? Let's wait to see how coaches impact those team dynamics during preseason.

### FROM THE COACH'S CLIPBOARD PART I: GIRLS VARSITY BASKETBALL

#### CAMPOLINDO HIGH SCHOOL

Head Coach: Clay Kallam

Last year: 10-16 (5-9, DFAL)

Coach Kallam's view:

We will be an up-tempo team that will shoot plenty of three-pointers. We are aggressive offensively and defensively, and should be better this year. The league is still very difficult, though, and Miramonte and Dublin are both quality teams, with Acalanes not far behind. Las Lomas will be better with Ron Pangilinan in charge, and Alhambra is always good.

We hope to finish in the upper half of the standings in the new league and reach the North Coast Section playoffs this year, but more important, we want the girls at all levels of the program to have a good experience with basketball.

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### **MIRAMONTE HIGH SCHOOL**

Head Coach: James Kizziee

Last year: 27-4 (14-0, DFAL), NCS Division III Champions

Coach Kizziee's view:

Coming from the men's side of the court last season, my knowledge of the lady's side of the court is limited to hearsay and articles read. However, I am more than certain that the preseason that Darrell (Hirashima, Sr., not the Acalanes coach) has put together, including the Healdsburg Tournament and the West Coast Jamboree, is consistent with the road followed in season's past which has helped prepare the Lady Matador's to be strongly competitive in league play for the past several years.

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### **ACALANES HIGH SCHOOL:**

Head Coach: Corrie Mizusawa

Last year: 16-12 (9-5, DFAL)

Coach Mizusawa's view:

With great match-ups in the Walnut Creek Classic, Alameda Tournament and West Coast Jamboree, we will be challenged and prepared for the tough DFAL season ahead of us.

The biggest difference this season from what the girls have told me is how much harder they're working and how much more fun they are having. It's remarkable how much each player's confidence level has skyrocketed. Our hard work and confidence will definitely help us this season.

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## **PART 11: BOYS VARSITY BASKETBALL**

### **CAMPOLINDO HIGH SCHOOL**

Head Coach: Matt Watson

Last year: 22-8 (12-2 DFAL), NCS Division III Champions

Coach Watson's view:

We are emphasizing team play so we are looking for a combination of kids that can play well together.

The loss of Jack Trotter (now playing at Stanford) and Will Shields is huge. The one thing people do not realize is how much those two (plus Tommy Wraith) brought to the team off the floor, tremendous leadership.

The (preseason) tournaments are going to be very difficult which is good and bad. The good thing is that the kids understand when they play as a team that they can compete with elite teams in the upper divisions. The bad thing will be if we do not learn from our mistakes. Since our league is so tough from top to bottom I believe our preseason (which gives us NO nights off) will have us game ready come January.

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### **MIRAMONTE HIGH SCHOOL**

Head Coach: Dave Brown

Last year: 20-7, 10-4 (DFAL)

Coach Brown's View:

The top 5 teams from last year's DFAL are still part of the new DFAL - and that includes 4 NCS champions in the past 5 years. So, our league will be as tough as ever. Plus, now we'll always get to play Campo twice - and you've gotta love that.

It's hard to replace Peter Briskey. Plus, we graduated some great players in Zac Akin, Elliott Schoenbart and Trevor Boswell. You make up the difference by working hard in the off-season to develop each returning player and create a new identity for this year's team.

We expect great things from all 5 of our returning players (Eric Obeysekere, Chris Hatfield, Davis Louie, Jared O'Leary and Spenser McDonald). In addition, we will rely on 3 players who are moving up from JV: Troy Akin, Payam Vadi and Austin Grier. Most of these 8 young men have been coached extensively by Drew

McDonald - who is a Miramonte graduate and a key part of our amazing staff - so they're ready to go.

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## **ACALANES HIGH SCHOOL**

Head Coach: Darrell Hirashima, Jr.

Last year: 19-9 (9-5 DFAL)

Coach Hirashima's view:

Because we graduated the majority of last year's roster and the coaching staff is new on the job, some have slightly lowered expectations for us. You can't replace guys like Joey Anderson, but every new team is inevitably compared to those who came before until they stake their own claim on the program.

Our first tournament is the Chris Vontoure Classic hosted by De La Salle. Our first game of the tournament will be against De La Salle... If we can prepare to compete with a De La Salle, we feel confident we can prepare to compete with anyone in our league.

We will be looking for consistent contributions from seniors, Steve Maze, David Gomez, Justin Owyong and David Masi. The four are being asked to shoulder a lot of responsibility but have bought into their new roles and are gaining the faith of their teammates.

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