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## Miramonte DFAL Basketball Starts Strong

By Conrad Bassett





Mats' Anthony Pignelli drives past Cougar Kellen Ito on way to Mats' first DFAL win Photo Jordan Fong

The 2009 Diablo Foothill Athletic League basketball season started out strong at Miramonte High School, where both the Matador boys' and girls' teams edged local rival Campolindo teams before a packed house.

In the early game, the Lady Mats overcame several Campolindo runs and hung on to win 60 to 56 while the Miramonte boys also won by four, 52-48, in a defensive struggle.

The Miramonte teams wore their black away uniforms in honor of their former coach, Darrell Hirashima, who passed away on December 19. He had led the girls' team to several outstanding seasons, including an NCS Division 3 championship last year. The standing room only crowd honored Coach Hirashima with a moment of silence prior to the beginning of the game.

The Lady Cougars came out strong and led the game after the first period by a score of 19-16. The 2nd period was a streaky one as Miramonte pulled to a nine point lead before Campolindo went on a 14-0 run to lead at halftime, 32-28.

The Lady Mats went to work in the 3rd period. Led by Chelsey Christensen's six points, Miramonte took the lead for good, outscoring Campo 17-8. In the final period, the Mats held off several Campo rallies with the Cougars only getting as close as 47-46 with just over six minutes remaining.

Christensen and Stephanie Golden each finished with 12 points to lead Miramonte. Christensen also had 12 rebounds and Golden added eight. Kelly Thomas led Campo with 15 points.

The game was the DFAL head coach debut for Lady Mats' James Kizziee. It was also the first time Kizziee coached the Mats against rival Campolindo where his daughter, Taylor, is a freshman on the varsity squad. Taylor scored five points for the Cougars in what was her own DFAL debut.

Last season, Coach Kizziee helped coach the Campo boys' team to the NCS Division III championship. Previously, he'd been involved in the Lady Cougar basketball program.

The boys' game was also a tough battle. Miramonte, who had not beaten Campolindo since 2003, was on a mission to end the streak.

The taller Mats went inside early and opened up a 14-7 lead after one period. They expanded the lead to eight at the half before Campo whittled down the lead.

Led by tenacious defense from seniors Chris Dyer and Miles Macy, Campo cut the lead to 36-31 after three periods, and closed the lead to two a couple of times during the last quarter before clutch free throw shooting from Spenser McDonald and Eric Obeysekere ended the suspense.

Macy was fouled with less than four seconds to go while shooting a three point attempt and hit the first two free throws to cut the lead to 50-48.

Macy then intentionally missed the third free throw but Mats' Obeysekere came up with the rebound, drew a foul and nailed the final two free throws for the 52-48 win.

Obeysekere had 16 points to go with 15 rebounds. He made 12 of 16 free throws. Davis Louie added ten points for Miramonte. Dyer led Campo with 13 points, nine rebounds, and five assists.

Since the opener, both the Miramonte and Campolindo boys' teams have won all their DFAL league games.

The Mats are now 4-0 and atop the DFAL, having beaten Acalanes, Dublin, and Dougherty Valley handily. The Cougars are in 2nd at 2-1, crushing Dougherty Valley and coming out strong against Las Lomas last week. Acalanes is in fifth place with a 1-2 DFAL record, having thus far beaten Alhambra but lost to Miramonte and Las Lomas.

As for the girls' DFAL records, Miramonte is now 3-1, while Campolindo and Acalanes are tied, each with a 2-1 DFAL record reflecting respective losses to Miramonte.

League play resumes on Friday night when Miramonte travels to Las Lomas, Campo plays at Dublin, and Acalanes faces Dougherty Valley in a home game.



Mats' Lauren Kimble shoots over Taylor Kizzie in the DFAL league opener Photo Jordan Fong

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