



Miramonte Boys and Campo Girls Advance to NCS Semi-Finals

Tonight the boys play at home while the girls are away

By Conrad Bassett



Miramontes' Payam pump fakes two Acalanes defenders in their Friday night victory pictured: David Gomez (33), Payam Vadi (22), Eric Obeysekere (35)

The NCS Division III playoffs looked like a DFAL tournament on Friday night as the Miramonte boys beat the Acalanes Dons 66-49 and the Campolindo girls defeated Miramonte 71-63 in quarter final action in their home courts.

The Dons, by virtue of their earlier defeat of Campolindo, headed to Orinda looking for another upset.

The game was one of several momentum changes with the Matadors having the final one. In the first period, Miramonte jumped off to an 8-2 lead behind Eric Obeysekere who scored four points on his way to a 22 point, 10 rebound evening. The Dons fought back by scoring the last five points of the period and the first six of the second led by David Gomez who quickly hit two threes and two other shots in the run.

The Dons went up nine at 26-17 when Zach Bloom drilled a three but then the pendulum swung back to the Mats who ended the period by scoring 15 of the last 17 points to erase the deficit.

The third period saw the Dons again come back with eight straight points behind Taylor Caldwell who finished the night with 11 points and 13 rebounds. The Matadors took the lead for good at 39-38 on a Davis Louie jumper at 3:02 to go. The teams traded baskets and Acalanes cut the lead to 48-45 with 6:06 left in the fourth on a Steve Maze layup and free throw before the Matadors pulled away scoring the next 12 in a row punctuated by an Obeysekere block with Louie grabbing the rebound and firing a strike to Chris Hatfield who finished with a layup.

Dave Brown's Mats are host-

ing Piner tonight, Wednesday, March 4.

The Dons finished the season at 15-13.

On the girls' side, it was the third meeting of the season between the local rivals. The Cougars scored early and often, jumping off to an 18-7 lead and fighting off several Matador challenges to head to a semi-final matchup on the road against #1 seed Bishop O'Dowd tonight.

The middle two periods were played very closely as the Cougars pulled to a double-digit lead early in the third period. However, behind Stephanie Golden's hot hand, the Mats closed the deficit to 51-48 heading to the fourth period. Golden scored the first basket of the fourth (she finished with a game high 30 points) and it was a one-point game.

Then the momentum switched as the Cougars opened up the lead with Stephanie Triggas hitting a couple of key three-point jumpers and Annie Ward adding to her team high 24 points.

Meghan Ringer added 14 points and had 8 rebounds while Triggas had eight assists for Campo. Golden added 11 rebounds and three blocks on the Miramonte side.

The Lady Mats finished at 19-9.

Photo Jordan Fong



Liza Katz presses the ball after getting a rebound Photo Jordan Fong

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The Upside, Downside and Flipside of Passion

By Linda U. Foley



Heather Wilson

Photo provided

Campolindo graduate Heather Wilson is the picture of health and femininity, her flowing blonde tresses caressing her shoulders. It's hard to believe that this woman once had a day job in banking while maintaining the weekend persona of "Crashing Girl," the moniker of a nationally recognized motocross icon.

Wilson began racing motorcycles, a field dominated by men, in her mid-twenties and was a ranking pro by the age of 30.

In the sporting arena, motocross is a demanding and rigorous competition. Arduous training, strength, mechanical know-how, and racing-smarts aside, there is the inherent, unavoidable burning and crashing. Having undergone dozens of surgeries for seriously debilitating injuries, often followed by months of rehab, Wilson never lost sight of her determination to end up on The Podium, to get back in the

saddle.

Not satisfied with her top ranking amidst a field of male athletes, Wilson wrote marketing proposals to her sponsors to better promote their products, and herself as an athlete. Her marketing endeavors, along with her race performance record, gained her the attention and trust of some 23 sponsors.

Wilson also developed a dedicated fan base by focusing on the younger crowd, initially offering posters, "Heather bears," and stickers. Next came Heather Makeovers, which made kids' bikes look akin to her motorcycle. Make-up (no smudge mascara) and hair products followed.

She laughs, "Haven't come up with a non-smear lipstick yet."

Wilson's notoriety coupled with her desire to inspire youngsters to reach their potential, brought her into another arena -- motivational

speaking.

Her speaking engagements, including Sister-to-Sister, a program helping junior high girls transition into high school, focused on self-esteem, pursuing personal passions, the evils of gossip, importance of long-lasting friendships, and 'making it' in a man's forum without compromising your femininity.

"I would ride onto the stage... decked out in all my gear... take off my helmet and shake out my hair. Not surprisingly, the girls always wanted to know first how my hair looked so good being scrunched under the helmet. Later on, they all wanted to know how I 'made it.'"

A tempestuous journey to achieving her goal of being one of the Big Three on the Podium has come at an ultimate price. Her latest injuries have ended her racing career, permanently. Nonetheless, Wilson's energy and confidence are contagious. Undaunted, she deems all her experiences as a learning process to other areas of success and self-fulfillment. Her current focus is to complete her degree at Saint Mary's in -- no surprise -- marketing, which eventually may include designing riding gear intended to enhance the female athlete.

There's no doubt, Wilson will succeed in whatever she undertakes and leave an indelible and feminine mark. The old song, "I am Woman, Hear me Roar," may have been written for someone exactly like Crashing Girl.

Born to Ski?



Taariq Saffouri races the Giant Slalom at Sugar Bowl

Photo Deven Hickingbotham

Taariq Saffouri started skiing when he was four years old. He joined the Alpine Meadows racing team, part of the Tahoe League, when he was eight. At age nine, he began to show real promise as a racer, finishing in 8th place in the 9-10 age group; a serious contender, competing against boys who live in the Tahoe area and ski daily. This year Taariq, who is now in 5th grade at Rheem Elementary School in Moraga, blew away the competition in the first race of the season,

taking 1st place in the Giant Slalom in the league's opening race at Sugar Bowl on January 10, 2009. He's currently ranked #2 in the Tahoe League 9-10 Boys division.

"Taariq demonstrated that he had a talent and passion for skiing at (an) early age," says his mom, Reem Saffouri. "He showed an interest in race teams when he was six; every time he saw the team training he would say, 'Mom, I want to join the race team.'"

Taariq placed third in the

Slalom race on Saturday, February 7, at Diamond Peak. He was also given the distinction of being the forerunner and opening the Far West race at Alpine Meadows; an honor, explains Reem Saffouri, because, "Far West is the equivalent to Orinda Aquatics (year-round swimming) in this area, whereas Tahoe League is like OMPA."

The next race for Taariq will be on Sunday, March 22, at Alpine Meadows.

L. Borrowman