



Independent, locally owned and operated!

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published November 24, 2010

2010-2011 Lamorinda Girls' Basketball Preview

By Conrad Bassett

A year ago, the Diablo-Foothill Athletic League girls' basketball league lived up to its reputation as one of the toughest in California, with four of the seven teams going on to the Northern California Championships: Miramonte, Campolindo, Dublin, and Dougherty Valley. This year the teams look poised for a repeat.

Kelly Sopak returns for his second year as the Miramonte coach, fresh after leading the Mats into the second round of the state tournament before falling to eventual champion and nationally ranked number one--St. Mary's (Stockton.) The Matadors finished 22-8 and although they lost Stephanie Golden to graduation and to Gonzaga, they return a strong nucleus from last year's team.

Senior Liza Katz returns following a junior season where she was selected to the DFAL all-league first team. Also back are junior Alyssa Johanson who was named second team All-DFAL and fellow juniors Taylor Kizziee and Janine Loutzenhiser who were named as honorable mention.

Sopak will also be counting on contributions from another junior, Devon McDonald, and sophomore Carly Gill as the Mats take on another ambitious pre-season. After last year's grueling season that featured 23 games away from Orinda, the schedule includes more games in the friendly confines of their home gym. Following a ride up Interstate 80 to the Truckee Invitational, they host the Mat Tip-Off Classic as well as the Emerald Division of the West Coast Classic which will feature several top teams and players.

Campolindo finished 20-10 a year ago and lost Meghan Ringer to graduation and Southern Utah University but coach Clay Kallam also does not have an empty cupboard from which to build this year's Cougar team.

Amanda Forshay returns for her senior season before heading out to Puget Sound for her college career. Also coming back are seniors Annie Ward and Chloe Hull, who established herself as a starter a year ago. Mallory Brown is healthy and is looking forward to a good junior season as is classmate Annelise Ito who moves into a starting role. Other seniors who are back include Erin Nakahara, Ruthie Shapiro, and Meggie Nelson. Sophomore Laura Hickey also returns.

Newcomers include sophomore Annie Shurtz, junior Melissa McCue, and freshman Ashley Ewing.

Kallam will be challenging his squad early and often as they will join host Miramonte in the Emerald Division of the West Coast Classic and taking what has recently been an annual trek to the Valley of the Sun as they travel to the Nike TOC in Phoenix, AZ.

In Lafayette, Mike Wilson will be taking over an Acalanes team that went 15-12 a year ago. Wilson comes to Acalanes after spending time most recently at Alhambra. He coached the Acalanes Junior Varsity from 2005 to 2007. Last year's team had only three seniors, so Wilson will have a strong nucleus of returning players. Seniors Kiara Harewood, a second team All-DFAL last year selection, and Emani Harrison, a first team All-DFAL selection, return and both started and played well last season. Harewood is a tremendous shot blocker and Harrison very strong on the boards. Samantha Cheng also returns for her senior year at point guard.

Two juniors are back--Sophie Taylor and Meredith Collett, as well as three sophomores--Jamie Jacobs, Molly Martin, and Marie Paladino.

The team travels will stay local for all of their tournaments--including hosting their own Acalanes Classic and traveling to one at Northgate in Walnut Creek and also playing in the West Coast Classic's Sapphire Division. They do travel to Sonoma Valley and San Marin as part of their non-league schedule.

The league again appears to be one for survival of the fittest. Most of the Dougherty Valley (26-4 last season) team returns and Dublin (21-8 a year ago) also will have several top scorers back. Alhambra has seen improvement and Las Lomas hopes to do the same as well.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA