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**Miramonte Boys' Basketball Splits Series with Acalanes**

*Lady Mats defeat Lady Dons*

By Conrad Bassett



Stephen Collins (21) drives to the basket through Miramonte defenders Anthony Piganelli (1) and Matt Lim (4). Photo Jordan Fong



Kiran Shastri (21) pushes the ball up court. Photo Jordan Fong

The second half of the Diablo Foothill Athletic League basketball season has started and the three Lamorinda schools are jockeying for the opportunity to return to the post-season. In Orinda last Friday night, Acalanes boys came to avenge an earlier loss to Miramonte. Acalanes' girls did not have as much luck as the boys. They lost to the Lady Mats for the second time this season, although keeping

the game much closer this time around.

The Miramonte boys' varsity edged the Dons 62-60 on the road earlier in the month and Acalanes did not want to have to play catch-up again. Behind the sharp shooting pair of seniors Stephen Collins and Michael Jackson, the Dons opened up a 14-9 lead after one period and increased it to 33-16 off of a three by junior James Griffin late

in the second quarter.

Not to be outdone, Miramonte came clawing back in the second half. Senior Anthony Piganelli muscled inside for six third period points and at the end of the period the Dons' lead was down to 11.

The teams traded baskets early in the fourth period as junior Ross Anderson scored 10 of his game-high 20 points including a banked-in three pointer to cut the lead to 56-50 with 3:10 to go. The Mats closed the lead to four with 21 seconds to play but Collins and Griffin each calmly hit two free throws to seal the 61-54 win.

Collins finished with eight rebounds to go with his 17 points. Griffin had 12 points. Anderson added ten rebounds for a double-double in the loss.

Dons head coach Darrell Hirschman Jr. felt good about his team-wide effort. "Stephen Collins was shooting well and hustling all over the court with rebounds, assists, and steals." He also noted, "This was a big win for us as the team is improving at the right time of the year as we finish the DFAL season and prepare for the NCS playoffs."

On the girls' side, Acalanes kept this game much closer than their first meeting when they lost by 27 at home. In arguably the toughest league in Northern California, the Lady Dons fell 57-46 to Miramonte.

The Matadors were led early by junior Janine Loutzenhiser who drilled two threes and fellow junior Taylor Kizziee who hit a base line three point shot in the first period to open Miramonte's domination. Kizziee worked double duty, performing the national anthem before both the boys and girls games.

The first period ended at 14-9 with Miramonte in the lead and the Mats doubled the lead to ten at the half. The Dons made a mini-run to open the third as senior Kiara Harewood hit two free throws and junior Sophie Taylor a basket but the Mats' senior Lisa Katz answered with two quick baskets and Miramonte scored 23 of the next 30 points to build a 22 point lead at the end of three quarters.

In the final period, the Dons came back to cut the lead to 11, but fell short. Harewood led the Dons with 20 points while Loutzenhiser had 18 for Miramonte. Alyssa Johanson added 13.

Head coach of Miramonte, Kelly Sopak said of the win, "I was

pleased with our defensive effort, especially on the boards the first three quarters. We had a tough week with four games but accomplished what we needed to accomplish in winning all four." Sopak looks forward to the upcoming match-ups against the top competition in the league. He said, "Now the fun begins with Dougherty Valley and Campolindo coming up. We are getting healthy and I am excited to see what we can do in the coming weeks."

Acalanes hosts Alhambra on February 4th while Campolindo hosts Dublin. Meanwhile Miramonte travels to Las Lomas. Rivalry games recommence on February 8th when Miramonte travels to Campolindo.

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Janine Loutzenhiser (50)



Kiara Harewood (1)

Photos Jordan Fong

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